TABLE TENNIS IN TRAVNIK

FROM ITS EARLIEST BEGINNINGS

FADIL MEŠAN

Travnik, 2001

TABLE TENNIS IN TRAVNIK
FROM ITS EARLIEST BEGINNINGS

FADIL MEŠAN

TRAVNIK, 2001

Publisher: Travnik Regional Museum

For the publisher: Fatima Maslić

Editor: Fatima Maslić

Proofreader: Mirko Adžaip

Printed by: Graforad Travnik

Print run: 1,000 copies

CIP Cataloguing in Publication, National and University Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo

796 . 386 (497.6 Travnik) "1972/2000"

MEŠAN, Fadil
Stoni tenis u Travniku od najranijih početaka / Fadil Mešan. Travnik: Regional Museum, 2001.
104 pp. illus. 30 cm

About the author / Mustafa Gafić: pp. 102-103

ISBN 9958-9415-2-X

COBISS/BIH-ID 9447942

Based on the opinion of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, No. 06-15-2422/01, and pursuant to Article 3 of the Law on Sales Tax on Products and Services, this manuscript is a product on whose sale a sales tax of 12% is payable.

FOREWORD

When, in 1982, by entering the First Federal League of former Yugoslavia, the women's team of TTC "Borac" achieved the greatest success in the history of our town, I decided to rescue from oblivion everything that had happened and everything that preceded table tennis, this wonderful sport, finding its way first into courtyards, gardens and cafes, and then into the halls of our town.

I began carefully gathering information and recording it chronologically. In this I received great help from the people of Travnik, especially the older ones, and I take this opportunity to thank them for their help.

With special gratitude I remember the late Šehab Teskeredžić, a longtime athlete and sports official, who provided me with a number of valuable photographs and pieces of information, which you will find on the pages of this book.

A contribution to the making of this book was also made by the doyens of Travnik journalism, Mustafa Gafić and the late Karlo Jurić, who for years informed us objectively and promptly about everything happening in sport in Travnik, on radio and television and in the newspapers for which they worked as correspondents or contributors.

This book would certainly have been much poorer without the information from the Student Dormitory in Travnik, which was provided to me by Messrs. Salih Bašinjac, Anton Glogoški and Tomislav Josipović.

To them, as well as to the physicians Hamdija Hubjar, Zdravko Babić, Olga Babić, Mehmed-Mešo Mulahalilović and Branislav Kuliš, I extend my heartfelt thanks.

Some names and facts worthy of attention may perhaps be missing from this book. I ask readers to forgive me for any such omissions that may have crept into the text or arisen due to technical and other circumstances beyond my control.

From the very outset, women's table tennis achieved results worthy of admiration, representing our town and TTC "Borac" in the finest way. Unfortunately, this was not the case with men's table tennis, so events from women's table tennis will dominate the book. I ask readers not to hold this fact against me either.

This book is dedicated to Table Tennis Club "Borac" Travnik, which in 2002 celebrates 30 years of existence.

Fadil Mešan
Brussels, 1997

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TABLE TENNIS IN THE WORLD

To this day, no one has managed to explain where table tennis originated, a game that is certainly among the fastest played today. If we nevertheless wanted to work out how it came about, we would have to start with the history of ball games, with Asia, England, and even North America mentioned as possible birthplaces. There is enough evidence that China and Egypt were familiar with ball games long before our era. According to Ivor Montagu, certain cave inscriptions tell us that table tennis was known in China in ancient times. One thing is certain: this game arose from people's desire to bring the ball game indoors. By the 15th century, the name tennis was already known in England. Tennis and table tennis share a common ancestor. Both grew out of real, or royal, tennis, a game of privileged nobility played on specially prepared, larger courts and in open spaces. The development of the game proceeded in two directions: one with a ball struck along lines and off walls, and the other over a net - badminton, deck tennis and table tennis.

The beginnings of table tennis can be discerned in England in the mid-19th century. At that time the rubber ball was invented, which was an extraordinary advance for ball games. Tennis was played outdoors, while indoors, during bad weather, people played on a table with tennis rackets, using a plank, a row of stacked books, or tins as a net. The game was called miniature tennis, which was already a great step closer to the table tennis we know today. At that time, in Great Britain, its colonies, and in America, various versions of miniature tennis were played with non-standard equipment and without fixed rules. It is first mentioned as table tennis in 1884, in the catalogue of the firm F. H. Ayres. This referred to a game played indoors, in miniature, on a table, with rubber balls and square rackets covered in cardboard or cloth to produce a degree of spin. After that, table tennis very quickly approached the table tennis we have today.

First, the rubber ball was replaced by a cork ball, but as this brought no real progress, efforts turned toward finding a ball made of a material whose composition would bring about a revival of the game and finally establish it among the sports. This was not long in coming. The English engineer James Gibb noticed celluloid balls in a children's toy shop in America. This marked a turning point in the development of the game, which became more interesting and spread rapidly in England from 1899 to 1904. Gibb named table tennis with the onomatopoeic name Ping-Pong, after the sound the ball made when striking the table and the wooden racket most commonly used at the time.

In those years table tennis was very static, played mostly in tailcoats and evening gowns. The ball was gently pushed over to the opponent's side, so that it stayed in play for a long time. The static nature of the game was dictated above all by the material the racket was made of. People played with so-called banjo rackets, covered in parchment and fitted with a large handle. The racket was later refined. First, it was covered with pimpled rubber, then with sponge (which would later be banned), and finally it became today's racket, covered with backside rubber - a rubber-sponge combination - and soft rubber, also a rubber-sponge combination.

The first official rules of the game were drawn up in England as early as the late 19th century, but since there was no international body for table tennis, these rules did not apply in every country. At that time the winner was declared after reaching 30 points, whereas today the winner is whoever first reaches 21, or, in the case of a 20:20 score, whoever first achieves a two-point lead, for example 22:20.

English[1] students carried table tennis to the continent, and the first international tournament was held in Vienna in 1901, at the Hotel "Continental". The Englishman Edward Shires won that tournament. The winner later brought table tennis to Hungary in 1904. That same year the international championship of Hungary was held, won by the Viennese player Kaufman. In 1909, the international championship of Hungary was won by the 17-year-old Jakobi, who would later become the first world table tennis champion. From 1912 to 1925 no international championships of Hungary were held. During this period there was stagnation of table tennis in Europe.

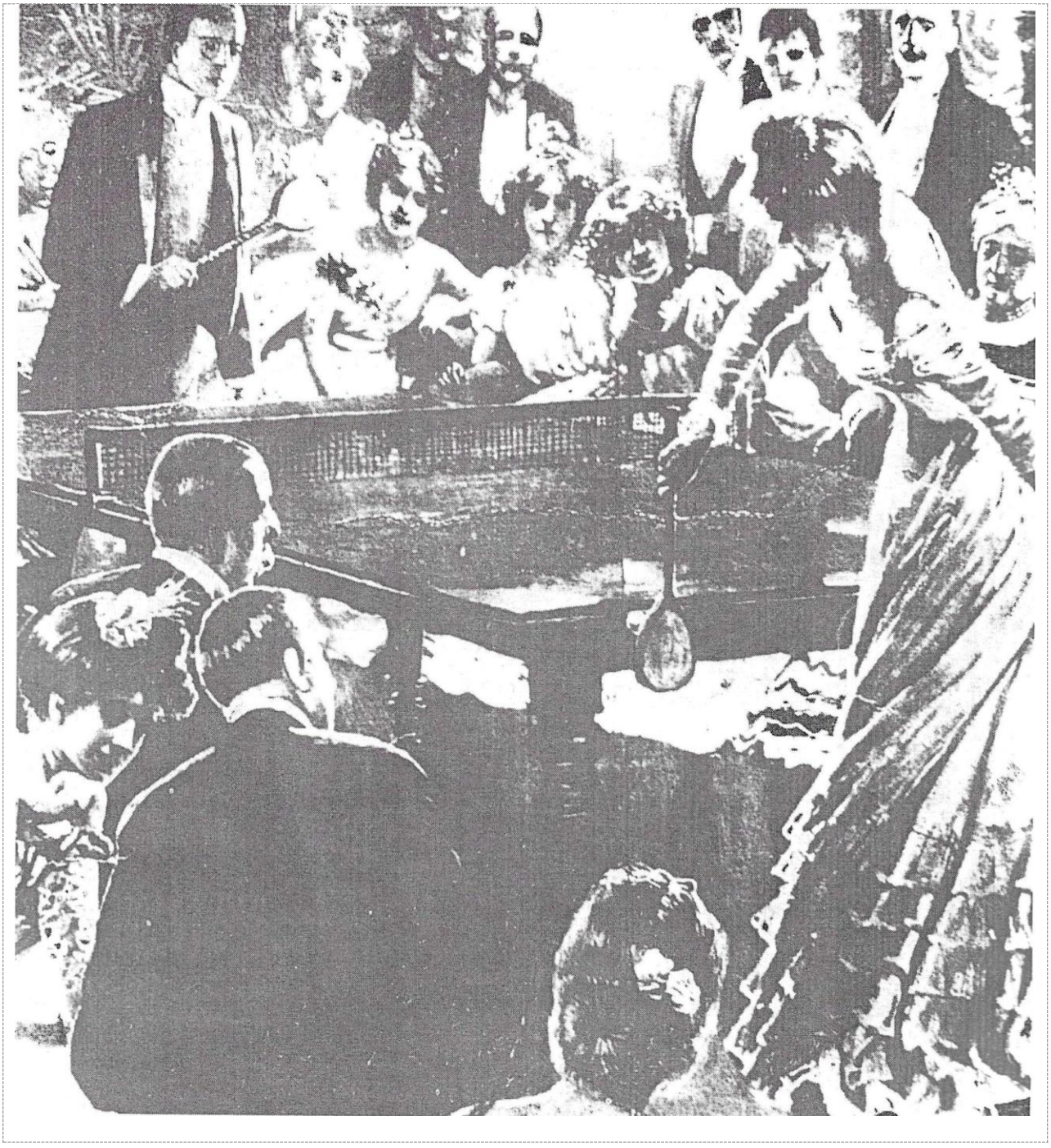
After the period of stagnation, the game revived again, first in England in 1921, and spread even to places where it had not been played before. At this time the first table tennis associations appeared. The "English Ping-Pong Association" was founded, the first association of its kind in the world. One of the first city associations was in Vienna, called the "Wiener Tisch Tennis Verband", in which the players Hartwich and Kaufman were active. The Austrian Wildam was said to be the best female table tennis player in the world at that time. Associations also appeared in other European countries. Thus, in 1925, the Czechoslovak Table Tennis Association was founded in the "Carlton" restaurant in Prague. The game spread across the continent, and in other parts of the world the number of enthusiasts grew, with national associations being formed. In addition to those already mentioned, the TTA of Wales was formed in 1921, of Austria in 1923, the Hungarian association was formed in 1924 from twelve clubs, the TTA of India and Sweden in 1926, of France in 1927, of Japan and Yugoslavia in 1928, of the USA in 1933, of Australia in 1936, of the USSR in 1951, and of China in 1952, among others.

The first consolidated set of rules was drawn up in England in 1925. The commission consisted of I. Montagu, P. E. Warden and G. J. Ross, drawing on regulations already accepted in practice. The appearance of the pimpled rubber racket played a significant role in turning table tennis into a dynamic sporting game. The ability to impart spin to the ball, and the greater possibility of driving and cutting, increasingly forced players to move both away from and toward the table. Alongside the development of technique, the wish to establish an international body, as well as to organize a world championship competition, became increasingly apparent. The idea of founding an International Table Tennis Federation was put forward by the president of the German Association, Dr. G. Lehmann, at the international championship of Germany held from 13 to 17 January 1926.

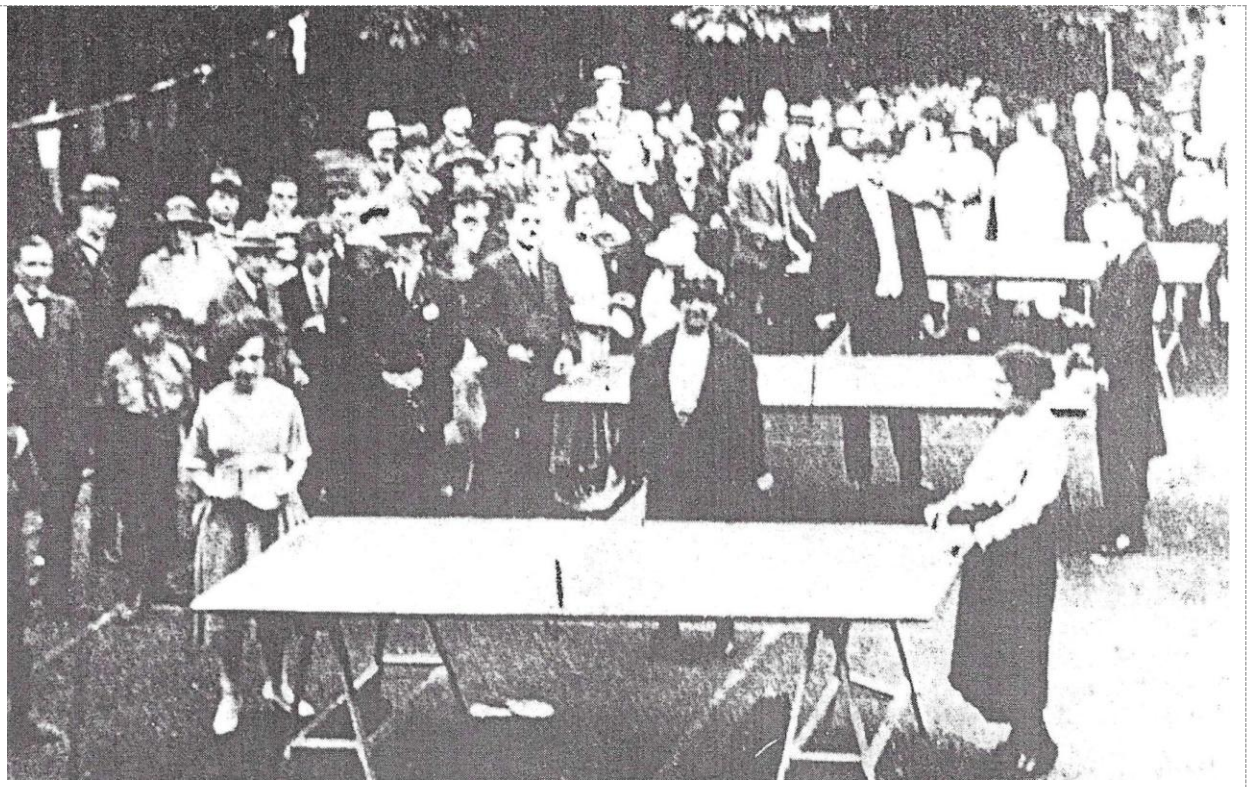
During the first world championship, the ITTF - International Table Tennis Federation - was founded in London on 12 December 1926, with founding members England, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Austria, Sweden, and later Wales. The Englishman Ivor Montagu was elected the first president of the ITTF, a position he held until 1967, when he was succeeded by Roy Evans. Alongside the president, it is worth noting that two vice-presidents, secretaries and members were also elected. Two commissions were also formed - one for equipment and balls, the other for the rules of the game. One of the first and most important tasks of the ITTF was to harmonize the rules of the game across different countries and to revive international contacts. Although uniform rules were established, they were changed and amended over the years. Today they are uniform, and all official tournaments are played according to them.

The International Table Tennis Federation, the ITTF, has 126 members (as of 1977), and since table tennis has spread to every continent, the figure of 24 million table tennis players shows that it is, after basketball, volleyball, football and athletics, the fifth most widely played sport in the world. To the great delight of all table tennis enthusiasts, table tennis has been included among the Olympic sports.

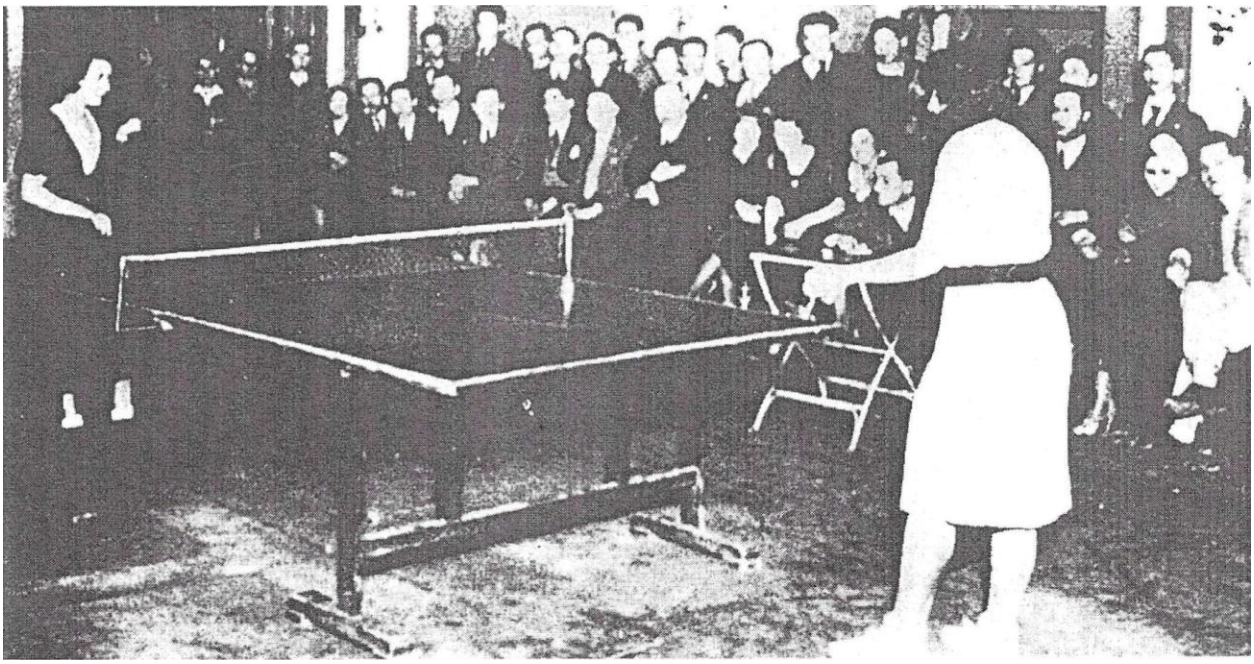
[1] Excerpt from a book published on the occasion of 50 years of table tennis in former Yugoslavia.



The photograph shows how table tennis was played long ago. These were, in fact, the beginning of the game. It was played in a very static manner, mostly in tailcoats and evening gowns. Note the use of so-called banjo rackets, covered in parchment and fitted with a large handle. The racket was later refined into its present-day form, its surface covered with backside rubber (a rubber-sponge combination) and soft rubber (also a rubber-sponge combination).



Comparing the previous photograph with this one, a certain advance in the development of the game is clearly noticeable. Yet this is still a time when people played in everyday clothing, and the game was still very static.

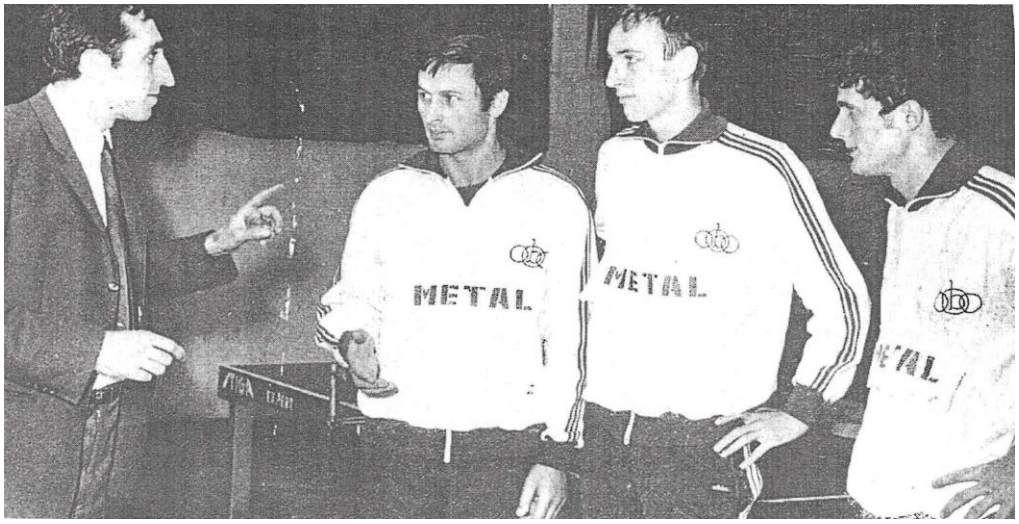


Competition for the world championship considerably raised the level of the game. In the photograph, the Hungarian table tennis players A. Sipos and M. Mednyanszky. Budapest, 1931.

THE BEGINNINGS OF TABLE TENNIS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Ping-Pong arrived in Bosnia and Herzegovina, more precisely in Sarajevo, from Czechoslovakia. It was brought in 1929 by our students who had studied there, the most famous among them being Miroslav Radojčić and Albert Pardo. The first organizations were also formed, such as "Stok", the "Officers' Home", and the "Italian Society", and the first competitions were held in yards and gardens, since there were very few clubs with even modestly suitable premises. Besides in Sarajevo, there are traces of activity in the interior of Bosnia and Herzegovina as well. Ping-pong was played in Banjaluka, Zenica, Tuzla, Travnik and some other places.

On 19 May 1945, the Conference of Physical Culture Workers of Bosnia and Herzegovina was held, at which the Physical Culture Committee of Bosnia and Herzegovina was formed. At the end of that same year, sections for individual sports were created within FOBIH, including, among others, a section for tennis and ping-pong (table tennis), with Bela Ler and Strahinja Petrović as officers in charge. The following year, 1946, the Physical Culture Association of Bosnia and Herzegovina was formed, and with it the Table Tennis Committee of Bosnia and Herzegovina, whose first president was Lazo Materić. On 11 December 1949, with delegates in attendance, the founding assembly of the TTA of Bosnia and Herzegovina was held, on which occasion a two-match encounter between the senior men's teams of Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina was also organized, which the Bosnia and Herzegovina team won 5:0. Playing for the Bosnia and Herzegovina team at the time were: Salom, Zulejkić and Vrebac. Joco Vočkić took charge of the Tennis and Table Tennis Association of Bosnia and Herzegovina. But as early as 1954, an independent Table Tennis Association of Bosnia and Herzegovina was formed, and Rafael-Braco Salom was elected president, remaining at the helm of the association for a full nine years, until 1963. From then until the breakup of former Yugoslavia, table tennis in Bosnia and Herzegovina would hold a high place, not only competitively but organizationally as well. Thus, among many other things, Bosnia and Herzegovina was also the host of the greatest table tennis showcase, the World Championship, held in Sarajevo in 1973.



One of the best clubs, not only in Bosnia and Herzegovina but in former Yugoslavia as well, is TTC "Bosna" of Sarajevo. In the photograph from the seventies, members of this club, from left: Anto Dafinić (coach), Enes Gazić, M. Živanović and Midhat Uštović.

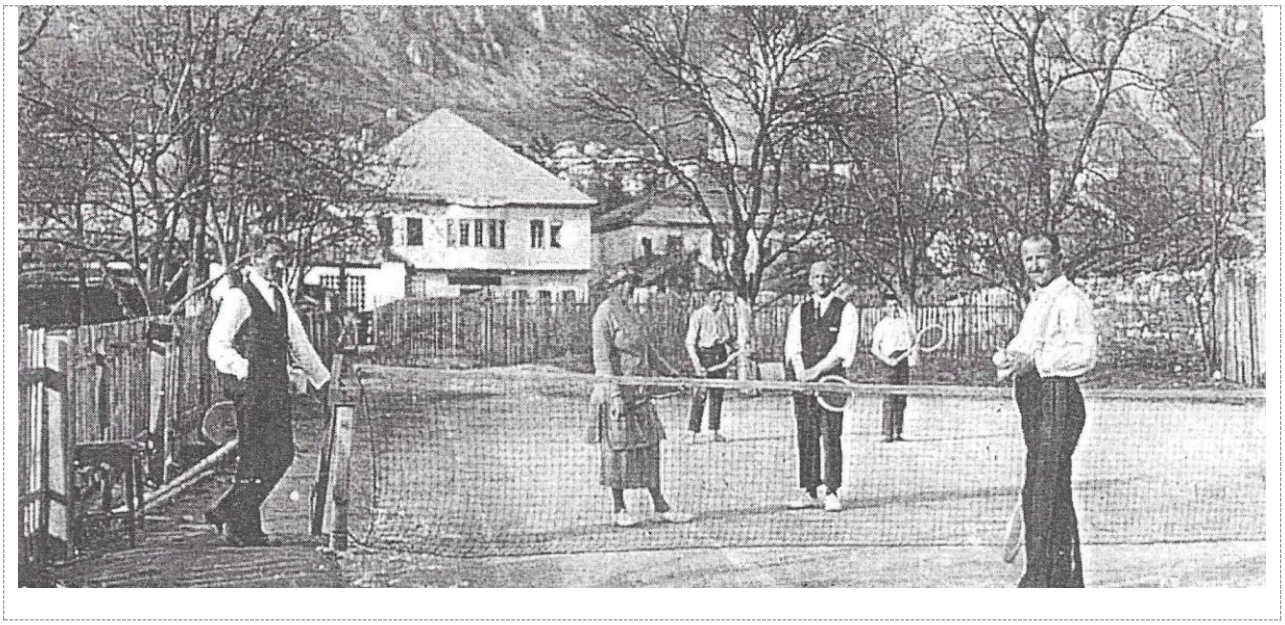
From 5 to 15 April 1973, Sarajevo was the center of world table tennis. A moment from the opening of the 32nd World Table Tennis Championship. At this championship, Travnik too had its representatives, in a trio of referees: Ibrahim Bazdulj, Salih Bazdulj and Fadil Mešan, while the names of three more Travnikjournalists - Mustafa Gafić, Karlo Jurić and Dragan Foršnarić - were entered in the Bulletin and Almanac of this championship. Among the members of the technical commission was Mustafa Hočkić.

TABLE TENNIS IN TRAVNIK

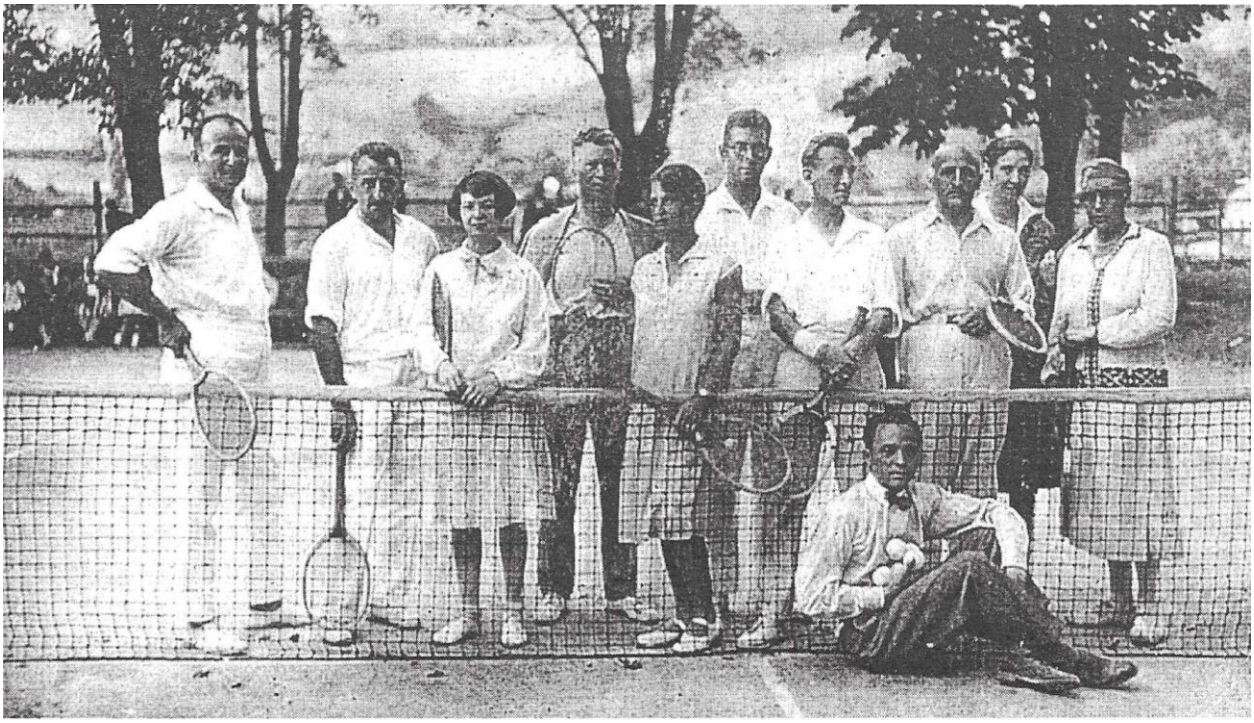
Since time immemorial the people of Travnik have engaged in sport, whether actively or recreationally, and they never wanted to lag behind others in this. It is something that has gotten under the skin of the people of Travnik. Societies, sections, clubs and other forms of organized sport and sporting recreation have always existed in Travnik. And it is so today as well. It is rightly said that Travnik is a town of table tennis, football, handball, karate and judo, basketball and chess, and the people of Travnik are proud of this. In all these sports, the participants nurture the hope that they will reach the very top rank of the First League. They nurture the hope that someone from their own sport will don the jersey bearing the national coat of arms. Yet in the sports listed above, they have not managed to achieve this. Still, the honor of sporting Travnik was saved by a sport that everyone counts among the minor ones. Table tennis! It became the greatest, for in the history of Travnik sport it is the only one to reach the very top rank, and its competitor wore the jersey of the youth national team of former Yugoslavia. You will read about this "minor" sport, which won first position among sports in Travnik, on the following pages.

It began back in far-off 1914, when Austrian soldiers in Travnik began playing tennis. At that time, students of the Jesuit Gymnasium also began playing tennis. Tennis courts existed in two places in town, of which there is documentation. One was located in the area beside today's "Borac" department store, and the other right at the entrance to the garrison on the right-hand side. According to the recollection of some residents of Travnik, a tennis court also existed in the small town of Turbe near Travnik. Tennis was played mainly by the wealthier citizens. The owner of the court beside the department store was an Englishwoman, Miss Dickinson, who was closely related to members of the English royal court. She owned a furniture factory in Travnik. Miss Dickinson deserves great credit for the fact that the people of Travnik engaged in sport and sporting recreation.

Not long after tennis began to be played, table tennis also arrived in Travnik. According to the recollection of older residents of Travnik who engaged in table tennis in the pre-war and post-war days, table tennis was first played by students of the Jesuit Gymnasium. The Jesuit Gymnasium was founded in 1882. One of the great devotees of table tennis was the late Šehab Teskeredžić. Mr. Šehab maintains that table tennis was played at the Jesuit Gymnasium as far back as 1924, and two years later, that is in 1926, at Miss Dickinson's as well. If we look carefully at the years cited by Mr. Teskeredžić, we will notice that the first year, 1924, coincides with the year in which table tennis is considered to have first been played in former Yugoslavia (Murska Sobota). Be that as it may, the fact is indisputable that the people of Travnik were among the first in former Yugoslavia to set eyes on the ping-pong ball.



The tennis court on the site of today's "Borac" department store in Travnik. In the photograph from 1930, Miss Dickinson with tennis enthusiasts. At that time tennis was played only by the wealthier citizens.



The tennis court within the grounds of today's garrison in Travnik. The photograph shows tennis players from Sarajevo and Travnik before the start of a match held in 1930. Playing for Sarajevo were Kotromanić, Kalman, while I was unable to find out the name of the third team member. Playing for Travnik were Besim Teskeredžić, Mujo Abdagić and Koželj. Nor was I able to find out the result of the match.

THE FOUNDING OF SECTIONS AND SOCIETIES

Table tennis spread among the citizens of Travnik through the students of the Jesuit Gymnasium and Miss Dickinson. Thus Osmo Čizmić-Čizmo obtained a table tennis table for his coffeehouse, which was located not far from the Jesuit seminary at Bašbunar (today's Hospital for Lung Diseases). Besides Osmo Čizmić, several other citizens also acquired table tennis tables. It is known that at that time the Teskeredžić, Božić, Carić and some other families had table tennis tables in their gardens. In the present-day building where the Cultural and Artistic Society "Borac" now carries out its activities, and which the people of Travnik today call "the Konak," there was an Officers' Club where table tennis was also played.

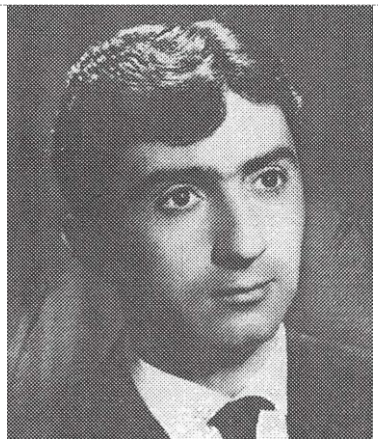
Sections were soon founded: "Trezvenost" in Kastel, the Sokol Society, and several others in which all confessions were represented. There were no official competitions of note in that period. Then came the war year of 1941. All sporting activity was rendered impossible. In the four-year war many victims fell, and among them many devotees of table tennis. After the war ended, the people of Travnik set about rebuilding their town and reviving sporting activities and cultural and entertainment life. In 1945, alongside the formation of many sections, a table tennis section was also formed within the sports society "Bratstvo." This section consisted mostly of gymnasium students, among whom the following stood out for their quality: Šehab Teskeredžić, Mića Pejanović, Stanko Plišo, Dušanka Vuković, and several other students whose names, unfortunately, I was unable to find out.

Competitions at a higher level in those first post-war years were rare, and those that were held were mostly of a local character. Nevertheless, the memory of the section's members at that time retained the championship of Bosnia and Herzegovina held in 1946 in Sarajevo, in the hall of today's FIS. The Travnik team competed in that championship in the following lineup: Šehab Teskeredžić, Mića Pejanović, Stanko Plišo and Dušanka Vuković. In the individual competition, first place went to Braco Salom, a member of the Sarajevo team, while none of the Travnik players took a more notable place. In the team competition, first place went to the Sarajevo team, and the Travnik players managed to defeat the team from Mostar by a score of 5:4.

After that championship, instead of table tennis in Travnik gaining even more momentum, it stagnated instead. Almost nothing worth mentioning happened. Table tennis continued to be played only for its own sake, since the section no longer existed. There were no competitions for years, and there was a danger that this wonderful sport would die out completely. Yet this did not come to pass, thanks to the then secretary of the Travnik Municipal Assembly and great table tennis devotee, Mr. Ejub Tarakčija. On his initiative, the table tennis "Aktiv" was founded in 1955, and Mr. Ejub Tarakčija was elected its president. The "Aktiv" had 26 members, and carried out its activities in the premises of today's "Konak." The better-known members of the "Aktiv" were: Mustafa Bešlagić, Časlav Matejić, Krunoslav Augustinović, Hamdija Mešanović, Enes Ramić, Ragib Bajramović, Stipo Grbeša, Rejhan Kurtiš, Mustafa Huseinbegović-Šujko and others. Unfortunately, the "Aktiv" was not long-lived either, but worth mentioning are several local competitions held, at which the winners were mostly one of those named above, most often Mustafa Bešlagić or Časlav Matejić. Attempts were made to participate in district-level competitions, but even this failed to bring recognition to table tennis.

At that time, it was difficult to obtain table tennis equipment: rackets, balls, tables, nets... In those days balls that cracked during play were not thrown away. They were glued back together with acetone and used again in play.

Table tennis was played by students of the Jesuit Gymnasium, and later by other citizens of Travnik as well. In the photograph, students and teachers of the Jesuit Gymnasium beside one of the first table tennis tables not only in our town but, I would claim, in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well. On the back of the photograph is written: "In memory, Sudko, Travnik, 28 August 1930, Mg. Preac."



Mr. Krunoslav Augustinović ranks among the best table tennis players our town has ever had. He belonged to a generation of outstanding table tennis players in which, alongside Mustafa Bešlagić, Časlav Matejić, Hamdija Mešanović and others, he stood out for his attacking style of play, which thrilled spectators. That Travnik later became a center of table tennis is surely owed in large part to Mr. Krunoslav Augustinović and his generation.

By then it was already clear that this sport received no support whatsoever from the municipal structures, and that it could survive only thanks to enthusiasts, and, of course, take the place that by all rights belonged to it. The last attempt to do something and to secure table tennis its rightful place was the organization of an international match between the national team of Poland and the representative team of the town of Travnik. The match was organized flawlessly, to the satisfaction of both the organizers and the local residents, who filled the hall of the Konak to the last seat. The match was organized on the initiative of Mr. Ejub Tarakčija, with the participation of the TTA of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in 1959.

The Polish team played in its strongest lineup: Calinski, Ratai and Deskur, while the town's representative team consisted of: Mustafa Bešlagić, Časlav Matejić and Krunoslav Augustinović. The match ended in a maximum victory for the guests, but the very good play of the Travnik players should be noted. Mustafa Bešlagić in particular put up strong resistance against the guests, for which the Polish national team members congratulated him on his good play, and those present in the hall rewarded him with thunderous applause. Not even this match managed to bring a better future to this fine sport, and the "Aktiv" soon ceased operating. After the collapse of the Aktiv, table tennis continued to be played on a mass scale only at the Student Dormitory. Tomislav Josipović, the Dormitory's director, and Anton Glogoški, an educator there, both enthusiasts, did not allow this sport to die out. Every day they introduced their charges to the secrets of the game of table tennis. Thanks to them, table tennis stood more firmly on its own feet. The two of them often organized competitions at the Dormitory. All the organizing was carried out by these two enthusiasts. The Dormitory's team competed in tournaments in which teams from dormitories across all of Bosnia and Herzegovina took part. The Travnik team achieved enviable results, as shown by the many trophies and diplomas won that adorn the display cases of their Dormitory. Better than the other residents were: Nedeljko Borković, Milovan Malović, Jovica Šatordžija, Andrija Gajić, Mustafa Hočkić and Fadil Mešan. Fadil Mešan also took part in the championship of the then Zenica District, where he won an enviable fifth place. Fadil Mešan also competed in the Republic Championship, where in the second round he lost to Granić of Zenica. Mr. Tomislav Josipović and Anton Glogoški organized, in 1962, one of the rare town championships, held on the premises of the Dormitory. The turnout exceeded all expectations. An incredible 123 competitors entered. From this number one can conclude that the people of Travnik have an exceptional love for this sport. The organization was at a satisfactory level, and two residents of the Dormitory, Jovica Šatordžija and Fadil Mešan, reached the final. The championship title for 1962 went to Fadil Mešan, who won the final match by a score of 2:0.

It is interesting to note that, going back to 1946, not a single girl worth mentioning had appeared in the table tennis sport of our town. In neighboring Zenica, by contrast, girls such as Nina Lučić and the Mitrović sisters had already reached the national team jersey of the former state.

Table tennis continued to be played not only at the Dormitory but also at the Konak, in schools and in enterprises. Table tennis tables and other table tennis equipment were acquired. It was in the air that Travnik would soon have a Table Tennis Club.

Tomislav Josipović

Anton Glogoški

Mr. Tomislav Josipović and Mr. Anton Glogoški did not allow table tennis in our town to die out. The contribution of these two enthusiasts to everything achieved in this sport is enormous.

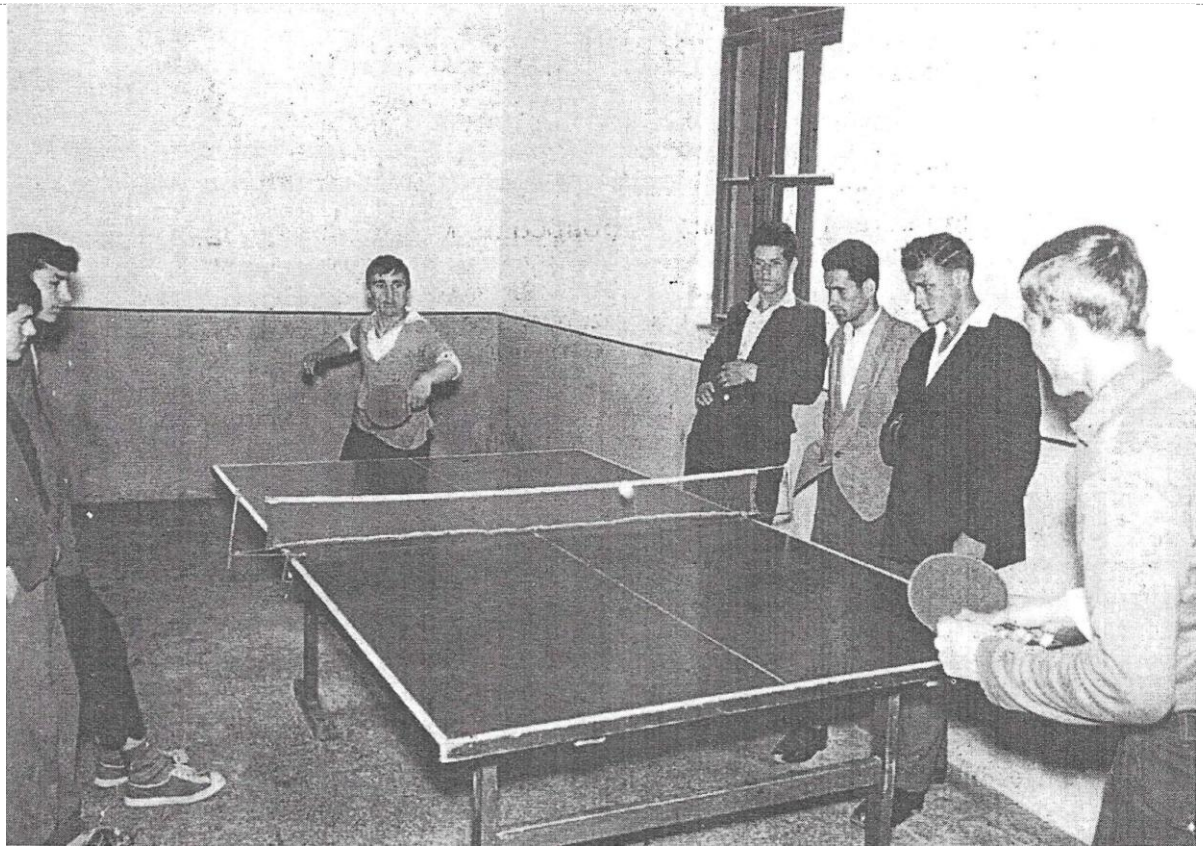
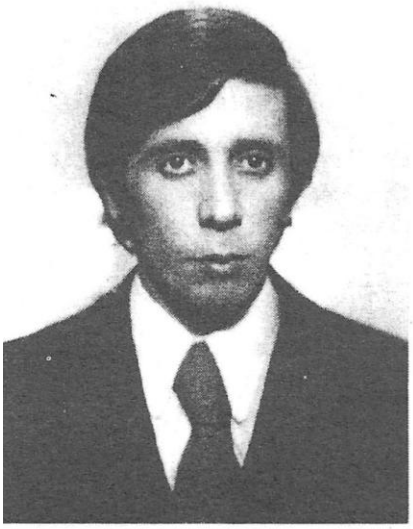


Table tennis has been played at the Student Dormitory since its founding, and the Dormitory's championships have been held there. In the photograph, one of the many finals for the championship title. Andrija Gajić (left) and Fadil Mešan (right), 0:2. The championship title went to Fadil Mešan for 1959 (Student Dormitory, November 1959).

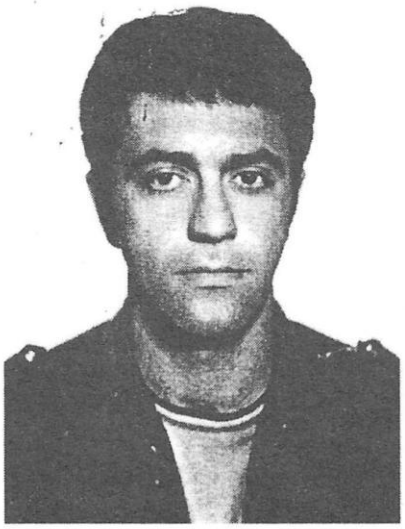
IN 1972 THE TABLE TENNIS CLUB "BORAC" - TRAVNIK WAS FOUNDED

One of the exceptional devotees of table tennis was Ibrahim Bazdulj, who was absent from Travnik for several years on account of his studies. With his return to his hometown, table tennis, at least in the recreational sense, was practiced more and more. Every day at the Konak, the following measured their strength against one another: Esad Kasumović, Mustafa Hočkić, Tihomir Dujić, Ibrahim Bazdulj and Fadil Mešan. There was often an enviable number of spectators present as well, who advocated for a more organized, mass gathering around table tennis. We had already thought earlier about founding a table tennis club, and now the moment was right to do something concrete about it. On the initiative of Ibrahim Bazdulj, Esad Kasumović, Mustafa Hočkić and Fadil Mešan, and with the help of Miroslav Banušić, Žarko Kolenda, Vladimir Jerić, Anton Glogoški, Tomislav Josipović, and of course the TTA of Bosnia and Herzegovina, whose representative was Radmilo Čolić, on 4 July 1972 a Table Tennis Club was founded, which was named after the clothing, linen and footwear combine "Borac." Thus the town of Travnik finally got a club that would, as you will read later, bring it more and greater recognition than any other sports club in town. Miroslav Banušić was appointed as the first president, to whom I extend, on this occasion too, exceptional recognition for everything he did, which brought TTC "Borac" to the heights it reached, as no other club in our town has. Through the media, citizens were informed that a Table Tennis Club had been founded in town and that all interested parents could bring their children, between seven and ten years of age, to the gymnasium of the Secondary School Center at the start of the 1972-73 school year, at a designated time.

In those days of 1972, TTC "Borac" officially began operating. The coaching staff, at that time without any table tennis qualifications whatsoever, consisted of three table tennis players: Ibrahim Bazdulj, Mustafa Hočkić and Fadil Mešan. I must note that the turnout of children exceeded all expectations. We accepted all applicants and divided them into two groups, a group of girls and a group of boys. Fadil Mešan took charge of the girls, while Ibrahim Bazdulj took charge of the boys. Training was held every day, and the progress was pronounced. Among the girls, the following stood out: the sisters Senada and Saliha Sojtarić, Sonja Solomun, Alma Sijamija, Mirna Halajkijević, Milanka Kaurin, Mensura Omerčaušević, Marijeta Drobnjak, Belma Lepir, Amela Kurtiš, Donata Pirhan and Snježana Vasić. Among the boys, the following were noted: Mišo Radović, Sulejman Gegić, Goran Ugrica, Nenad Rezdeušek, Nermin Mešinović, the brothers Emin and Jasmin Gradaščević, Salko Sojtarić, the Šutković brothers, Smail Hodžić, Zdenko Jurčević... Members of the presidency were often present in the hall and helped in overcoming difficulties, of which there were, of course, many. After a year of persistent work, we also organized the first town championship for the youth categories, girls and boys. To the general satisfaction of those present, excellent table tennis was shown for that age group. For the first time, tears of joy flowed for victory and tears of sorrow for defeat suffered.



Ibrahim Bazdulj



Mustafa Hočkić

Fadil Mešan

The greatest credit for the founding of the Table Tennis Club "Borac" in Travnik belongs to Messrs. Ibrahim Bazdulj, Mustafa Hočkić and Fadil Mešan, who raised this exemplary sporting collective to the level of the best sports clubs in former Yugoslavia. From the table tennis school over which these three table tennis enthusiasts held professional oversight from its very first day, many names known in table tennis circles have emerged. Among them, without doubt, are today's best table tennis players of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the sisters Adela and Linda Mešan. Today the national team of our country cannot be imagined without these two women from Travnik, which is why everyone is proud, not only in the table tennis club but throughout the town of Travnik

.

It was already clear then that table tennis, as a sport, would play a leading role among the sports that existed in our town at that time. The first winners of the pioneer championship were Sonja Solomun among the girls and Mišo Radović among the boys.

That same year, 1973, the pioneer girls of TTC "Borac" from Travnik took part in the championship of Bosnia and Herzegovina held in Hrasnica. At that championship they won the runner-up title. They were truly a pleasant surprise for everyone present. It is interesting to note that in the semifinal they defeated the team of TTC "Vitez", the reigning champion of Bosnia and Herzegovina at the time. In the final they suffered defeat to the pioneer girls of TTC "Kreka" from Tuzla, with the result 5:3. TTC "Borac" competed in the lineup: Senada Sojtarić, Sonja Solomun and Mirna Halajkijević. From that championship right up to today, TTC "Vitez" has always helped our club whenever it was needed. I take this opportunity to sincerely thank the members of TTC "Vitez", on behalf of TTC "Borac" and personally. The success at the championship of Bosnia and Herzegovina raised our morale and we intensified our work. We often trained twice a day, which brought faster progress in the quality of play. In the meantime, Ibrahim Bazdulj and Fadil Mešan earned their qualifications as table tennis coaches, which also brought progress. Alongside the pioneer team there was also a senior team in which competed: Ibrahim Bazdulj, Esad Kasumović, Mustafa Hočkić and Fadil Mešan. I must admit that this team achieved no particular success, but it justified its existence by contributing greatly to the development of the younger age group. I note again that you will read very little in this book about men's table tennis, for the reason that men's table tennis never managed to achieve the results that its quality should have produced. Somewhere mistakes were made. But where? I myself was too preoccupied with women's table tennis to have had time to deal with the problems that existed on the men's side.

I said that the pioneer girls had won the runner-up title and that this success motivated them to work even harder and more persistently. Such work, already the following year, 1974, at the pioneer championship of Bosnia and Herzegovina, brought the championship title of Bosnia and Herzegovina for pioneer girls to Travnik. In the final match the pioneer girls of TTC "Kreka" from Tuzla were defeated by the result 5:3. With that result our pioneer girls fully avenged the defeat from the previous year.

By winning the championship title, our pioneer girls earned the right to take part in the national championship of former Yugoslavia, hosted by Novi Sad. That year, due to commitments at his workplace, Mr. Miroslav Banušić resigned from the position of president. On 17 February 1974 the annual Assembly was held, at which a new Executive Board was elected, comprising: Želimir Halajkijević, Mićo Tovirac, Anton Glogoški, Hočkić Mustafa, Vidaček Dragana, Tomislav Gelić, Radovan Radović, Smail Sojtarić, Salih Bazdulj and Besim Terzić. Mr. Želimir Halajkijević was unanimously elected president.

The first generation of girls of the Travnik table tennis school with their coach Fadil Mešan. In the photograph, first from the left is Sonja Solomun (winner of the town championship), and next to her is Marijeta Drobnjak. Second and third from the right are Mirna Halajkijević and Alma Sijamija. Photograph from 1972.

The trophy and diploma for winning the team championship title in the pioneer girls' category for the year 1974. In the photograph from that year, from the left: Mirna Halajkijević, Senada Sojtarić, Želimir Halajkijević, Sonja Solomun, Alma Sijamija, Mustafa Hočkić and Sabina Hočkić.

THE FIRST APPEARANCE OF TTC "BORAC" AT THE TABLE TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIP OF FORMER YUGOSLAVIA – NOVI SAD, 1974

As for the first appearance at the national championship in Novi Sad, it is important to note that the pioneer boys of our club also took part in it. At that championship we left an outstanding impression on everyone present. We were the only club whose members were uniformly dressed. For that occasion, the "Borac" garment-manufacturing department dressed all the participants of our club at the aforementioned championship in dark blue suits bearing the combine's emblem. With our neat appearance we drew the eyes of those present. Besides that, every participant carried with them a wealth of promotional material, which depicted our town and its landmarks in the most beautiful way. There were badges, emblems, brochures, posters inviting those present to visit our beautiful town, and other items that helped promote Travnik. The central place was occupied by a poster presenting Vlašić with the wonderful Sports and Recreation Center "Babanovac".

At that competition we did not only show off the image of our town, badges, emblems and brochures. We showed that our pioneer boys and girls know how to play table tennis, and that in the future they must be counted on for pioneer titles as well as others in this sport. In Novi Sad we all learned a great deal. "The Little Ones" - our pioneer girls received this nickname after winning the title of pioneer champions of Bosnia and Herzegovina - after taking part in the national championship in Novi Sad, trained even harder, which resulted in a new championship title of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1975. To that title they added a series of individual titles as well as the championship title in the junior category, something few teams in our republic had managed to achieve. Besides sporting successes, we paid great attention to our members' success in school. To everyone's satisfaction, our members were all straight-A students, so in that regard we had no problems whatsoever. Our girls' pioneer team earned membership in the Republic League, in which it plays a very significant role. In terms of play they are equal even to the best teams, but youth and inexperience secured them only second place behind the unpredictable lineup of Sarajevo's "Bosna": Altarac, Šako, Krezić and Pavlović. That is the only reason why, alongside the pioneer and junior titles, they did not also add the senior one, which would have taken them to the qualifiers for entry into the highest table tennis rank of the former state. In that year, 1975, it became clear that women's table tennis would soon become the most successful among the sports of our town and that it would represent it in the finest way. Travnik's table tennis players were already known in the highest table tennis circles. The names Sonja Solomun, Mirna Halajkijević, Senada and Saliha Sojtarić, Alma Sijamija and Milanka Kaurin were spoken with respect.

The pioneer boys did not achieve what was expected of them. Of the most promising pioneer generation, not only in Bosnia and Herzegovina but I firmly maintain in former Yugoslavia as well, only a few remained. And just so you know what the surnames meant at that time: Rezdeušek, Ugrica, Radović, Gegić, Blažević, Sojtarić, Šutković, Nezirović, Mešinović, Hodžić, Gradaščević and a few others. Of all of these, only two remained, Sulejman Gegić and Mišo Radović, along with a handful of anonymous others. The two of them were also the bearers of quality among those who remained. Sulejman Gegić was also a pioneer national team member for Bosnia and Herzegovina, alongside the pioneer girls Sonja Solomun and Mirna Halajkijević, of which we are all proud. Still, irregular training and the lack of a coach caused men's table tennis to begin falling considerably behind the women's game. Radović and Gegić held their own with the best for some time longer, but stagnation began to be felt with them too.

The table tennis players of TTC "Borac" Travnik, participants in the table tennis championship of former Yugoslavia held in Novi Sad in 1974. From the left: Sonja Solomun, Alma Sijamija, Mirna Halajkijević, Senada Sojtarić, Amela Kurtiš, Milanka Kaurin and Saliha Sojtarić. (Championship for pioneer girls and boys)

The men's table tennis team of TTC "Borac" Travnik, participant in the national championship of former Yugoslavia held in Novi Sad in 1974. From the left: Nezirević, coach Bazdulj, Radović and Gegić. (Championship for pioneer boys and girls).

TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA FOR PIONEER BOYS AND GIRLS, 1975
TRAVNIK

Organized by TTC "BORAC" Travnik, the 1975 championship of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the pioneer girls' and boys' category was held in the gymnasium of the "Antun Mavrak" Secondary School Center.

Over the two days the championship lasted, several talented girls and boys were seen, future masters of the celluloid ball, of whom much would soon be heard throughout our country. All the teams gave their maximum, and the contests satisfied the spectators who filled the hall to the last seat.

The people of Travnik had the most reason to celebrate, as their teams "Borac" and the "Braća Lolić" Elementary School took first and third place among the pioneer girls. Defending Borac's colors were: Sonja Solomun, Mirna Halajkijević and Senada Sojtarić, while for the "Braća Lolić" school team played: Saliha Sojtarić, Milanka Kaurin and Alma Sijamija.

The only disappointment for the home fans was caused by the Borac pioneer boys, who, above all due to an unfavorable draw and the inexperience of their third member Goran Ugrica, ultimately had to settle for fifth place. Still, it should be noted that Sulejman Gegić, along with Kapetanović from Doboj and Rizvanović from Vitez, was the best individual at the championship, losing only one match.

Among the pioneer girls, the most successful was the outstanding Travnik player Sonja Solomun, who won all her matches, defeating even the reigning champion of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Zoljić, from Tuzla. The finest and at the same time the most exciting match in the pioneer girls' category was the one between Travnik's Halajkijević and Tuzla's Gašparov, which Halajkijević won by the result 2:1, bringing great joy to her team and her town.

Here is the final standing in both categories:

Pioneer girls, team standings: "Borac" Travnik, "Partizan" Kreka, "Braća Lolić" Travnik, "Borac II" Travnik, "Omladinac" (D), "Sarajevo", "Stens73" (C).

Pioneer boys, team standings: "Ozren" (O), "Partizan" (V), "Partizan" (H), "Vitez", "Borac" (T), "Partizan" (V), "Partizan" (K) and "Partizan" (S).

After the competition concluded, the president of TTC "Borac", Želimir Halajkijević, presented the winning teams with commemorative trophies, while all the other teams received memorial diplomas. The organization of the championship was outstanding, and the people of Travnik deserve every congratulation. Everything functioned in the best possible order, and it can be said that Travnik is capable of successfully organizing competitions of a higher level as well.

Mustafa Ždralović (Belgrade's 'Sport', 1975)

The pioneer girls of TTC "BORAC" Travnik, who for the second time brought the championship title of Bosnia and Herzegovina to our town. From the left: Senada Sojtarić, Mirna Halajkijević, Sonja Solomun and coach Fadil Mešan. On the right in the photograph, Borac's second team, which competed under the name Elementary School "Braća Lolić" and won third place: Milanka Kaurin, Alma Sijamija, Saliha Sojtarić and coach Fadil Mešan.

A moment from the pioneer championship of Bosnia and Herzegovina held in Travnik in 1975. In the photograph, the mixed pair of TTC "Borac" Travnik, Mirna Halajkijević and Mišo Radović (left), in a match against the mixed pair from neighboring Vitez, Stukar-Šehić.

TWENTY-THIRD OPEN TABLE TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIP FOR PIONEER GIRLS AND BOYS ZAGREB, JANUARY 1976

A great challenge for every pioneer team, and especially for every competitor individually, was certainly the "Open Championship of Zagreb in Table Tennis for Pioneer Girls and Boys", which was also the unofficial championship of former Yugoslavia. This championship had a traditional character, first held way back in 1954. Similar championships were organized in cities such as Novi Sad, Umag, Varaždin... But the true appeal lay in taking part in the Zagreb one. The competition featured the following disciplines:

Pioneer boys, team and individual - older,

Pioneer boys, team and individual - younger,

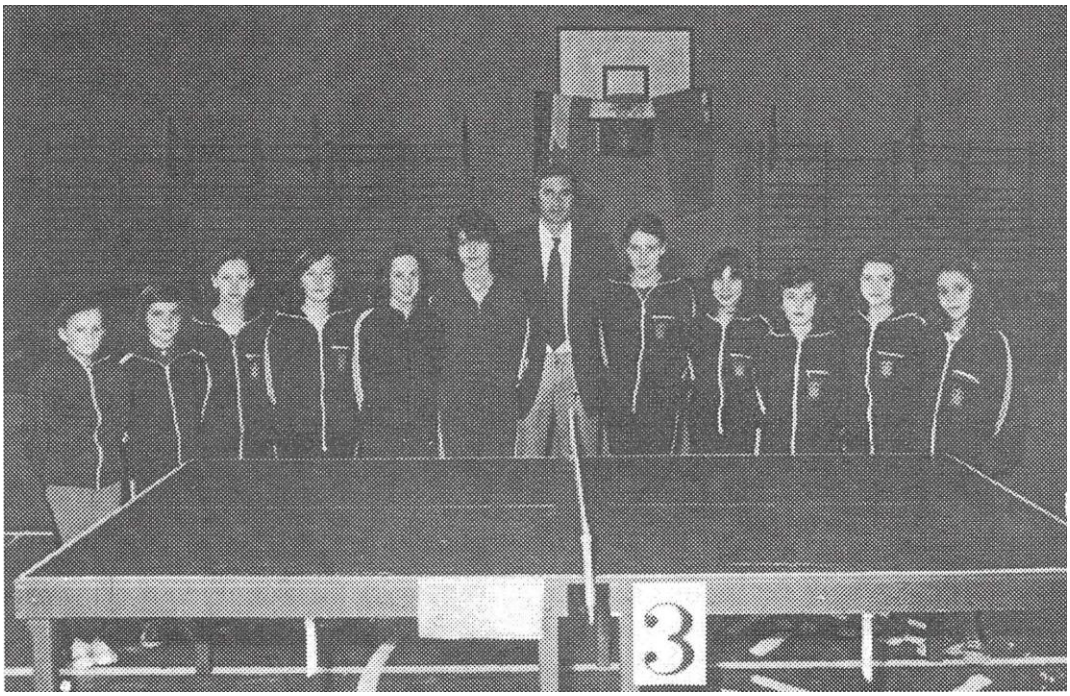
Pioneer girls, team and individual - older,

Pioneer girls, team and individual - younger.

A team consists of two male competitors and two female competitors.

Winning first place in any of the aforementioned disciplines is an exceptional honor. The names of the winners are inscribed in gold letters in a book intended precisely for that purpose.In January 1976 our pioneer teams set out for the first time to test their quality, at the level of the former state, at this impressive gathering. It was the 23rd Open Championship of Zagreb. For the first time our pioneer boys and girls found themselves in a hall with over seven hundred competitors from every part of Yugoslavia. Those who were not present at this competition cannot even imagine what it was like. So I will only briefly describe the atmosphere. Over forty tables were set up in two halls, along with ring barriers, judges' tables, and stands for several thousand spectators. Altogether it made for an impressive sight. In the aforementioned stands sat the young competitors with their coaches, and there was no small number of parents as well. At the organizers' table, in the foreground, was the most popular man of this traditional competition, Mr. Stanko Oštir, a man whom everyone, not only competitors but visitors too, recognized by his distinctly corpulent figure and remarkable baritone voice. Without Mr. Stanko Oštir the championship would certainly have been quite different. Although I will not list them on this occasion, there were quite a few other people involved, deserving of credit for the successful realization of the competition. The atmosphere during the competition is very interesting, and sometimes comical too, since the competitors vary so much in height and weight - at one table you might see a tall lanky fellow measuring his strength against someone whose head barely peeks above the table, while at another table the same is done by a skinny one and a chubby one. Once the matches are finished, it happens that at the very same moment, in different parts of the hall, you see some throwing their rackets and crying over a defeat suffered, while those who have won jump for joy, sharing it with their coach or those closest to them. And how many forgotten items there are - rackets, sneakers, tracksuits, jerseys, towels, watches and who knows what else - announced over the loudspeaker in the well-known baritone voice of Mr. Stanko Oštir. All in all, the event is exceptional in every respect for anyone who was a participant or merely an observer of this competition.

As an educator, and delighted by the competition, I proposed to TV Zagreb that they film a documentary, since in that way, with such a film, they would certainly make a great contribution, not only to popularizing this competition but also to popularizing table tennis.



The table tennis school in Travnik was certainly, from 1972 when it began operating right up until 1991, one of the most renowned, not only in Bosnia and Herzegovina but in former Yugoslavia as well. This is confirmed by the results achieved during that period, and it can certainly be concluded just by looking at the photographs. Numbers combined with quality - few clubs ever had that. In the photograph above, the table tennis players of "Borac", from left: A. Kahvedžić, Mensura Omerčaušević, Saliha Sojtarić, Snježana Vasić, Edina Čimbur, Sonja Solomun, Fadil Mešan (coach), Senada Sojtarić, Mirna Halajkijević, Alma Sijamija, Amela Kurtiš and Snježana Sredojević.

In the photograph below, coach Ibrahim Bazdulj with students of the table tennis school, among whom the following stood out: Sulejman Gegić, Mišo Radović, A. Nezirović, the Gradaščević brothers, N. Mešinović, Boris Jovičić, Goran Ugrica, Nenad Rezdaušek, Salko Sojtarić and the Šutković brothers.

The proposal was accepted, but unfortunately the film was never made. Let us return to the championship. Our teams were unknown here, and no one included them among the contenders for a medal. The championship began with the team competitions. Our teams, the men's team and the second women's team, quickly left the competition and moved to the stands. Our first women's team broke through every obstacle, and to the great satisfaction of us all, reached the final.

In the final they lost to what was then the best pioneer team in former Yugoslavia, TTC "Fužinar" from the Slovenian town of Ravne na Koroškem. By reaching the final, we drew attention not only to TTC "Borac" but to our Travnik as well, and people began speaking of our pioneer girls with respect.

A special mark was left on this competition by the battles in the individual event. Our pioneers Sulejman Gegić and Mišo Radović were satisfying in their play, but a lack of experience, and indeed of sporting luck, did not allow them to produce play and results worthy of note. The same was true of the pioneer girls Senada Sojtarić and Alma Sijamija. The favorites in both categories were competitors from Slovenia, Croatia and Vojvodina. Our pioneer girls Sonja Solomun in the older category and Mirna Halajkijević in the younger one thought otherwise. From match to match they played better and better, sending into the spectators' seats even those whom many had already seen on the winners' podium. Playing in this way, both of them, each in her own category, reached the final. It was now certain that we were one of the rare teams that, since the founding of this prestigious competition, had managed to bring its competitors to three finals.

Who was happier than me at that moment? I was proud both of the club I coached and of the girls who represented it so beautifully and successfully. Both finals began at the same time, which did not suit me at all as a coach. Indeed, when competitors of this age are playing, frequent advice is essential. And despite my best efforts, I was not able to give it to both of them in time. Nevertheless, both started superbly. Each had won one set and lost one. They were playing the third, deciding set. I ran from one table to the other, advising them how to play at each moment.

Halajkijević was leading Ačko of TTC "Fužinar" 18:12, so I thought the match was already decided and stopped paying attention to her. How badly mistaken I was. I gave myself entirely to the match Solomun was playing. And how could I not, when facing her stood Suzana Aničić, a member of TTC "Opatija", a club in the First Federal League of former Yugoslavia. I only told Solomun this fact once we found ourselves in a victorious embrace. And what happened with Halajkijević? She lost the third set 22:20. I am certain that a large part of the blame for that defeat falls on me.

Despite that fact, there was no shortage of reasons to celebrate. Indeed, we were the most successful team of the 23rd Zagreb Championship, as was shown by the ceremonial presentation of awards to teams and individuals. It is hard to believe, but after the awards were handed out, one could even hear comments like: "Never heard of Travnik, and yet they're the ones who won." The next day the newspapers published a series of fitting articles saying many fine things about TTC "Borac" and the play of its girls. Particularly interesting was a piece by the respected journalist A. Kožul, published in the daily "Sportske novosti", which I reproduce here in full.

TRAINING IN A FUR COAT / CHEESE IN DANGER

Travnik cheese commands a high price. It is one of the most famous in Yugoslavia. Product number one of this beautiful little Bosnian town. But it seems its popularity has come into question.

- Call me Ali, but: Travnik is the table tennis center of Bosnia and Herzegovina! declares Borac's coach Fadil Mešan, categorically.

- Man, while everyone else has three or four players, we've got an army - 20 girls in training, not to mention the boys! And if only we had proper conditions?! Sonja Solomun is the first pearl of three years of work. A pioneer, yet already the senior champion of her republic!

- They don't ask who they're playing against. Not at all! It was only after she beat Aničić that I told her that was a First League player!

- If only we had proper conditions - Mešan laments again. - Never mind, this way it looks like we're doing winter training camp: a cold hall, cold cement underfoot, training begins in a fur coat! But there will be more results yet, man, I'm not afraid for the future!

A. Kožul, "Sportske novosti", January 1976.

Sonja Solomun is without doubt one of the best athletes our town has produced. The fact that TTC "Borac" managed to reach the First League of former Yugoslavia, and that it took a leading position among the sports of Travnik, is due above all to Sonja Solomun. I take this opportunity to thank her, on behalf of table tennis enthusiasts and personally, for everything she did for sporting Travnik. She was named the best athlete of Travnik and was among the best athletes in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

WORKING CONDITIONS

The working conditions were below the level of a club that truly represented the town of Travnik in the best possible way. So do not hold it against me if I take a few sentences to tell you where and under what conditions we worked, while still achieving results worthy of admiration.

We were given the small hall of the Secondary School Center, which had no heating, no hot water, no changing rooms, and lacked certain other necessities essential for working with the youngest children. If I add to that the fact that we were given only one time slot per day in the hall, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m., you can imagine what could be achieved under such conditions.

In addition to these difficulties, we had problems in the work itself. In fact, because of the large number of members in both the men's and women's sections, we were not able to work every day. So we gave the women's section Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and the men's section Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. We used the free Sunday by agreement. For these reasons, I maintain that the results achieved carry even greater value.

But there is no use in complaining and lamenting, and I must admit that none of those responsible for sport paid any attention to our complaints. So we turned to work rather than complaint, and the results, especially the one achieved in Zagreb, were the fruit of that work.

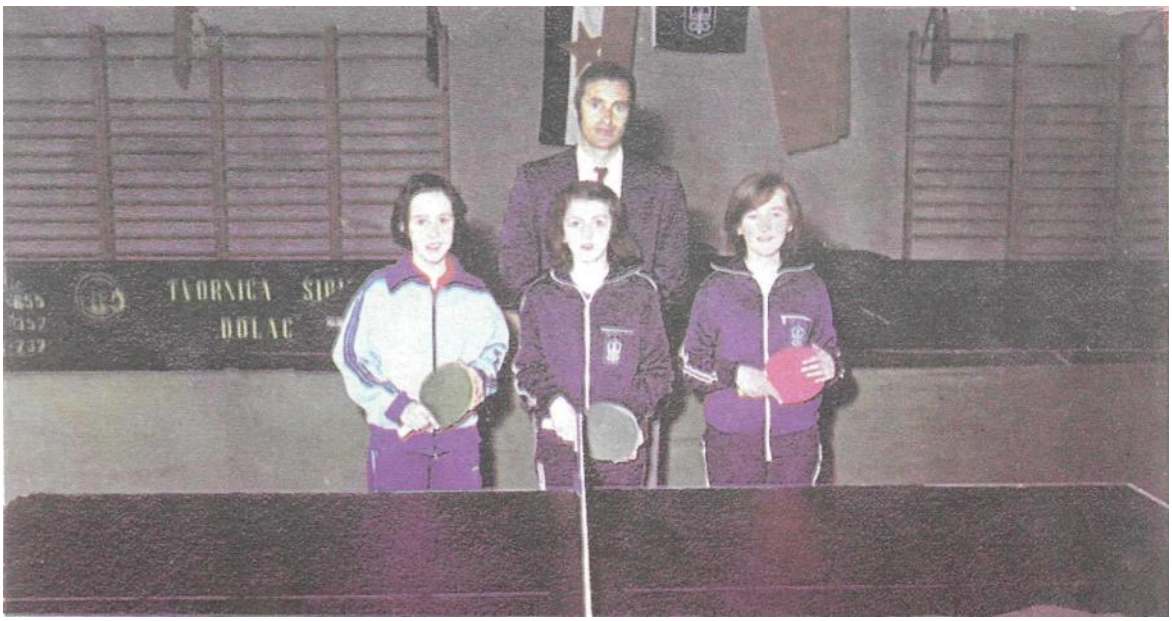
After the conclusion of the 23rd Zagreb Championship for pioneer girls, the names of our town's table tennis players Sonja Solomun and Mirna Halajkijević, and of TTC "Borac", were inscribed in gold letters in the book that already held the names of Fabri, Batinić and Perkučin, and of the clubs TTC "Senta", TTC "Vjesnik", TTC "Vojvodina", TTC "Bagat" and several others that had won the aforementioned championship.

The competition in Zagreb showed us that, despite the difficulties that persistently followed us, we needed to continue working, and with even more persistence and enthusiasm. The potential our town possesses can and should strive toward even greater achievements. And we had set our sights on entering the highest tier, the First Federal League of former Yugoslavia. We can and must achieve that.

At a time when we were advancing toward our set goal in giant strides, we were left by Mr. Želimir Halajkijević, the president of TTC "Borac". In fact, he moved to a new position in Sarajevo. With the departure of Mr. Želimir, our club lost a great deal. Above all, we lost a rare devotee and enthusiast of table tennis, and a man who knew how to solve even those problems thought to be unsolvable.

"Who is absent can be done without", our people say. I would add: without him, we had to manage. That is how we understood it. Mr. Radovan Radović, until then the club's secretary, was appointed to the position of president. We continued our work, and successes followed one after another as if on a film reel. Between 1976 and 1982, TTC "Borac" achieved a series of outstanding results, of which I will mention the most valuable and say a little about each.

The appearance of the hall in which TTC "Borac" was given the 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. time slot. This was a time when those who trained diligently in it should long since have been fast asleep. Looking at the photograph, one might say the working conditions were ideal. But they were nowhere near it. In the photograph you see the hall prepared for holding the 1975 Bosnia and Herzegovina table tennis championship for pioneer boys and girls.



Few table tennis clubs possessed the quality and the numbers that TTC "Borac" Travnik had. In the photograph, one of several pioneer girls' teams. From left: Edina Čimbur, Amela Kurtiš, Snježana Vasić and coach Fadil Mešan.

CHAMPIONSHIP OF FORMER YUGOSLAVIA IN TABLE TENNIS FOR PIONEER GIRLS AND BOYS
Travnik, 24-26 JUNE 1977

In that year, 1977, there arose, for the first time, a disagreement in outlook between the Presidency and the coach. Namely, after the outstanding result achieved in Zagreb, and our girls' step into the very top of Yugoslav table tennis, members of the Presidency began hinting to me, in a roundabout way, that Mr. Ibrahim Bazdulj should take over the women's team. At first I thought they were joking at Mr. Bazdulj's expense, since he had had no success with the men's team. But soon I was called to a session of the Presidency, at which a decision was made for Mr. Ibrahim Bazdulj to take over the work with the women's team.

I naturally did not agree with the decision, and on that occasion I told them that what they were doing was not only foolish but also a clear lack of understanding of sports methodology. Regardless of the arguments that spoke against what the Presidency had decided, the decision was carried out. I was offended, not only as a person, but also as a coach who had invested all his energy into working with that generation. I left the meeting determined never again to work with those people in table tennis, which, after my handball career ended, had become my second great sporting love.

My plans had truly been great: to win the Bosnia and Herzegovina championship, to become a member of the First Federal League of former Yugoslavia, and to place Travnik among the table tennis centers of that country. Mr. Bazdulj took over the work with the women's team, I must say, to the great surprise of many table tennis enthusiasts. I no longer appeared at the club, but I could not help following what was happening there.

In less than a month and a half, the championship of the former country in table tennis for pioneer girls and boys was due to begin in Travnik. Preparations for organizing the championship were underway, while the preparations of those who would represent us took a back seat. The time until the national championship passed quickly, and now it was necessary to show, and prove at the green table, that the women of Travnik rightly belonged among the most serious favorites for winning both the team and the individual pioneer titles. Organizationally, everything proceeded without a hitch.

The championship began on Friday, 24 June 1977, with the team competitions. Despite insufficient training, our girls made a superb start, to the general satisfaction of the packed hall of Primary School "Braća Lolić". They swept aside everything in their path. They reached the final, where, just as in Zagreb, TTC "Fužinar" from Ravne na Koroškem awaited them once again. Fužinar played in the lineup of Horvat, Logar and Ačko, while Borac's team consisted of Halajkijević, Sijamija and Solomun.

At exactly 9:00 p.m. on 24 June 1977, the final match for the championship title in the pioneer girls' event of former Yugoslavia began. That the two best teams had met is shown by the fact that the match ended in a 5:5 draw, at exactly 2:00 a.m., and lasted a full five hours. The championship title went to the Fužinar team, who had the better set difference, 13:11 in their favor. Here are the complete results of this match, extraordinary in every respect.

STK "Fužinar"	STK "Borac"		
Horvat	Halajkijević	22:20, 22:20	1 0
Ačko	Sijamija	24:22, 21:7	2 0
Logar	Solomun	16:21, 16:21	2 1
Ačko,Logar	Solomun,Halajkijević	19:21, 21:17, 16:21	2 2
Ačko	Halajkijević	21:15, 21:16	3 2
Horvat	Solomun	16:21, 17:21	3 3
Logar	Sijamija	21:5, 21:6	4 3
Ačko	Solomun	21:17, 19:21, 17:21	4 4
Logar	Halajkijević	21:14, 10:21, 17:21	4 5
Horvat	Sijamija	18:21, 21:15, 21:10	5 5

Table tennis players, men and women, of TTC "Borac" with the club's president and coaches. From left: Saliha Sojtarić, Andrija Solomun (v.m.teh), Sonja Solomun, Alma Sijamija, Smail Hodžić, Sulejman Gegić, Edina Ćimbur, Ibrahim Bazdulj (coach), Fadil Mešan (coach), Mensura Omerčaušević, Želimir Halajkijević (club president), Milanka Kaurin, Mirna Halajkijević, Senada Sojtarić and Mišo Radović.

The championship title had slipped from our grasp, but the runner-up title carried an exceptional shine of its own. Behind our girls stood those from Čoka, Senta, Zagreb, Ljubljana and other table tennis centers of former Yugoslavia. Next came the individual events, which in this sport bring the greatest excitement, and indeed the greatest surprises. We rightly expected one of the top places in both the women's singles and the doubles events.

I must admit that our Sonja Solomun had an excellent draw, and that according to every forecast she should have reached the final. But the better player does not always win, especially not in table tennis, where rackets are played with different materials (rubbers). In fact, in table tennis, players use various rubber materials, adapting them to their technical and physical abilities. Thus we have those of a distinctly attacking style who use several kinds of offensive rubbers, and those defensive players who likewise use several kinds of defensive rubbers. It is important to know that attacking players who rarely or never train against those who play with defensive rubbers regularly lose to them. As it happened, our Sonja faced one of these defensive players in the first round. As soon as I learned of this (I was not present at the championship), I knew Sonja would have serious problems.

And then something happened that shocked the packed hall. Guljaševa, as the girl from Čoka was called by surname, sent our Sonja off into the spectators' seats after just the first round played. As for how that came about, I maintain that we had not trained seriously and that more attention had been paid to organizing the championship than to preparing our representatives for it. The best placed of our girls was Mirna Halajkijević, who reached the last eight. The title for 1977 went to Alma Fazlić, a member of TTC "Peručica" from Foča. We salvaged the club's honor in doubles play, where Sonja Solomun and Mirna Halajkijević took first place. Our men's team was eliminated in the first round, as happened also to our second women's team, which competed under the name Elementary School "Braća Lolić". Nor did our pioneers achieve a result worth mentioning in the individual competition. It is worth noting that many dignitaries of table tennis visited our town and that all were unanimous in judging that the championship had been flawlessly organized. On that occasion they were also able to see for themselves the beauty and landmarks of our town.

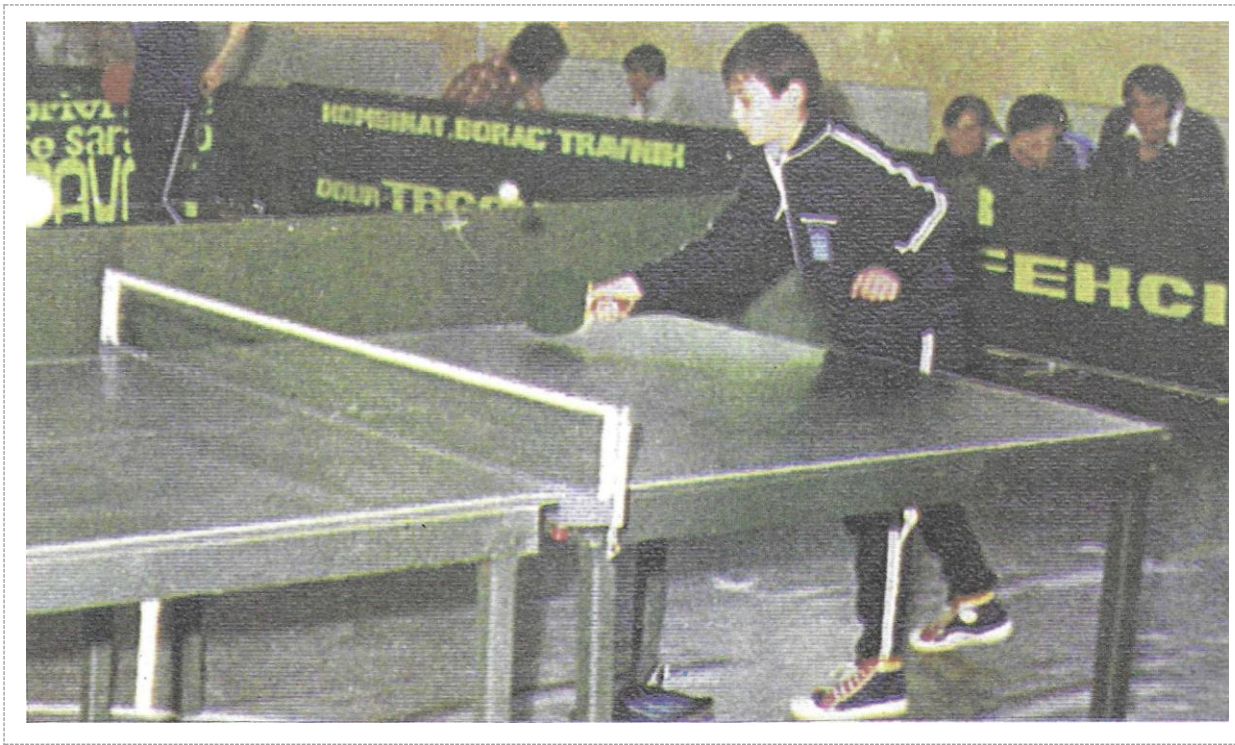
FIRST INTERNATIONAL SUCCESS
"BORAC" TRAVNIK - "ŚLĄSK" WROCŁAW, POLAND (WOMEN) 5:1

In their first international appearance, the young and talented table tennis players of Travnik's Borac easily and convincingly defeated their guests from Poland 5:1. The women from Travnik won the sympathies of table tennis fans with their effective play and brought their town its first international success. The only win for the guests was scored by Gaber against Halajkijević, who bid farewell to her teammates with this match, having recently moved to Sarajevo, where she would presumably play for "Željezničar". Before the match began, a small ceremony was held at which the president of TTC "Borac", Radovan Radović, and coach Fadil Mešan presented Halajkijević with commemorative gifts from the club for her six years of loyalty and her contribution to the success of TTC "Borac".

In the match in question, TTC "Borac" played in the following lineup: Mirna Halajkijević, Sonja Solomun, and Milanka Kaurin.

Karlo Jurić

At the table on the right, the mixed pioneer pair of TTC "Borac" Travnik, Saliha Sojtarić and Goran Ugrica - the two of them remained with our club for a long time and helped a new generation of table tennis players, both men and women, come of age. A generation from which today's two best table tennis players in Bosnia and Herzegovina would also emerge, the sisters Adela and Linda Mešan.



Sulejman Gegić, one of the greatest table tennis talents not only of our town but of Bosnia and Herzegovina, belongs among those table tennis players of our town whom we call the best. He also contributed to the sport of table tennis as a coach.

ELECTION OF THE NEW LEADERSHIP OF TTC "BORAC" TRAVNIK IN 1979

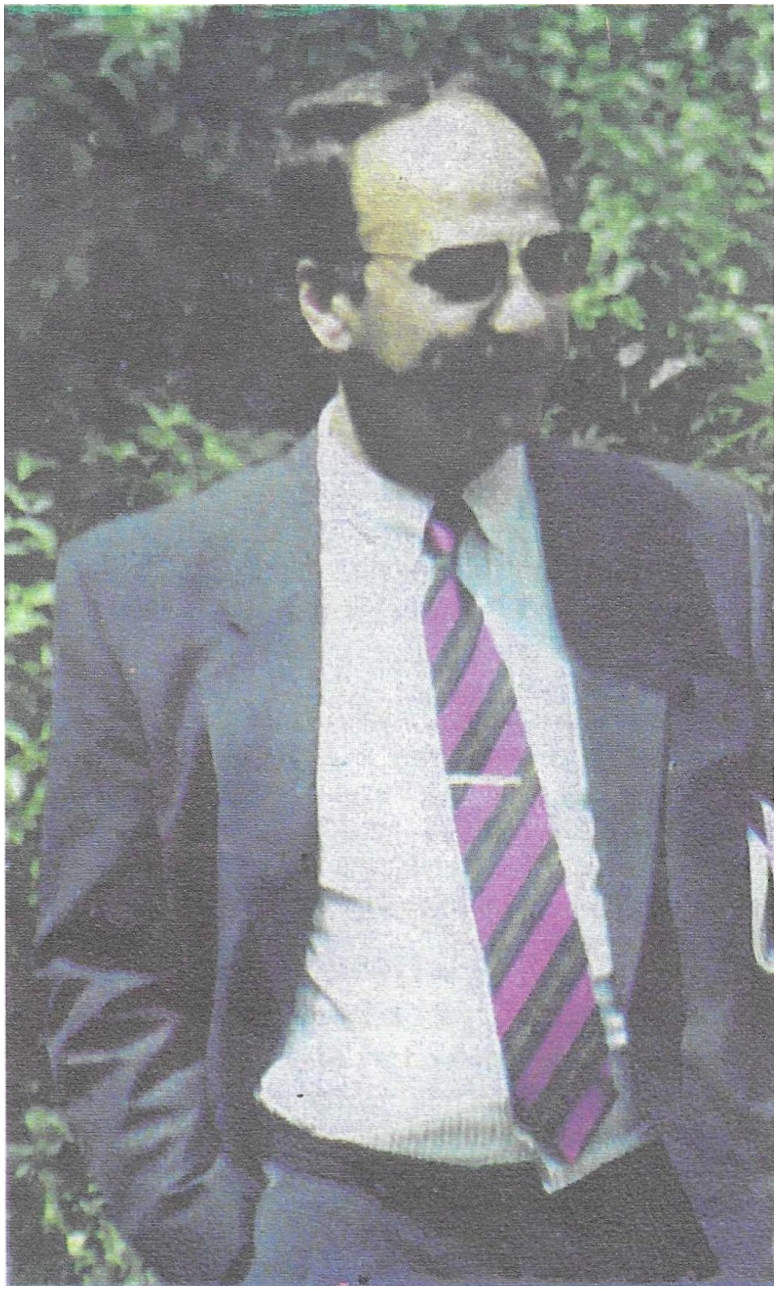
While the national championship was underway, it seemed as though TTC "Borac" was the darling among our town's sports. Everyone made an effort to help, to do something. Offers came in even when help was not actually needed. And those who mattered in the town promised that they would help whenever it might be needed. Of course, these were merely empty words. As soon as the championship ended, the club was forgotten by all those who had so loudly offered their help. Everyone turned their back on it. Interestingly, almost all the members of the board also left the club. Only two remained, Radovan Radović (president) and Mustafa Hočkić (secretary).

After my departure from the club, Mr. Hočkić temporarily took over the duties of coach of the men's team, while Mr. Ibrahim Bazdulj, being occupied at his job, rarely attended the women's team's training sessions. In such a situation of the table tennis club slowly dying out, Mr. Smail Hodžić worked with the women's team, and he deserves recognition for keeping the women's squad going during that time. The men's team was a member of the Regional League and simply could not manage to gain entry into the higher tier, the Republic League, where it objectively belonged. We had the quality for that tier in our young table tennis players: Radović, Gegić, Hodžić, and Ugrica. The problems lay in the fact that we did not have a solid coaching staff or quality training for that promising team. And this was certainly compounded by the steady rise of women's table tennis. But even that rise of women's table tennis was now called into question.

In addition to all the misfortunes that plagued TTC "Borac", the club's then president, Mr. Radovan Radović, also left it. Irregular training sessions, a poor financial situation, and the indifference of those responsible for sport called into question the very survival of TTC "Borac". The only possible solution was to convene an extraordinary Assembly of the table tennis club, at which a new leadership would be elected. That Assembly was convened at the end of 1979, and at it a new leadership of TTC "Borac" was elected, at that time on the delegate principle. The new Presidency was made up entirely of young people, and Mr. Izet Tamburić, then director of the "Borac" garment factory, was appointed president.

Here is the full membership of the Presidency: Izet Tamburić (president), Slobodan Šušljik (secretary), Nihad Memišević, Smiljan Božić, Kazimir Jurić, Mirsad Dautović, Branko Miljanović, Ahmet Kulenović, and Mustafa Hočkić. Immediately after his election, Mr. Izet Tamburić asked that a meeting be arranged which I would also attend without fail, and he requested that I take over the women's table tennis program again. The meeting was held, and the conversation ended to my satisfaction and to that of the members of the club's new leadership. "It's hard to drive a frog into water," as our people say. I gladly accepted the offer and waited impatiently to begin again where I had left off.

At that time, entry into the First Federal League of former Yugoslavia was gained through qualifying rounds among the champions of the republics, since a Second Federal League did not yet exist. Our women's team managed several times to win the Republic championship, but did not succeed in getting through the qualifying rounds. Later, the competition system was changed, and two Second Federal Leagues were established - East and West. By winning first place in the Republic, we became members of the Second League-West, made up of teams from Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In that very strong group we played a significant role, but were still too inexperienced to take first place, which would have secured direct entry into the First Federal League.



Mr. Izet Tamburić came to head TTC "Borac" Travnik in 1979. With his arrival, table tennis began striding forward in even greater steps. Our women players strung together success after success, until, as you will read on the following pages, in 1982 they achieved a success worthy of admiration. That year, they took first place in the Second League-West and thereby earned the right to stand shoulder to shoulder with the best teams of former Yugoslavia. That was not only the greatest success of TTC "Borac", but the greatest success achieved by any club in the history of sport in Travnik. Mr. Izet Tamburić made his own great contribution to that success. On behalf of table tennis fans, sports fans, and on my own behalf, I take this opportunity to thank Mr. Izet Tamburić for that contribution.

TTC "BORAC" TRAVNIK, MEMBER OF THE FIRST FEDERAL LEAGUE OF FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

At one of the Presidency's meetings, Mr. Izet Tamburić invited the members of the women's team. Among other things, he said at that meeting: "We have the quality for the greatest achievements, and it is my opinion that within the next two seasons we can achieve promotion to the highest tier." How good that statement made me feel, and what willingness to work it gave me. Mr. Tamburić fulfilled every promise he had made, so it was only right that we should make an even greater effort and achieve promotion to the highest tier. What we set out to do, we accomplished.

In the 1979/80 and 1980/81 seasons we were near the top, until in the 1981/82 competitive season we achieved a success such as no sports team from Travnik had ever achieved before. We took first place in the Second League and became members of the First Federal League of former Yugoslavia. The road to fulfilling our wishes was not at all easy. On the contrary, first place on the table was often decided in the very last round. That is exactly what happened to the members of our women's squad on 13 June 1982. In the final match we were guests of Zagreb's TTC "Maraton", for whom a win in this match would bring promotion to the highest tier.

In the hall where we played, everything breathed the celebration that the hosts confidently expected. However, we too were ready for celebration, for we secretly hoped for victory in that historic match. Just how evenly matched the teams were can be seen from the fact that the winner was decided by the very last match, played for the hosts by Romana Ejbi and for the guests by Milanka Kaurin. Our Milanka began very poorly and lost the first set outright, 21:7. After such a convincingly won first set, the hosts considered the rest of the match a mere formality. I, however, was not of that opinion. I knew the only way in which Milanka might still be able to turn the situation in our favor. The secret lay in changing her style of play, something coaches rarely if ever decide to do. Telling a pronounced attacking player to play defense is, in table tennis, madness. At that moment, though, I had no other choice. I told Milanka to use all her defensive skill in the next set, for I hoped that only through defense could she work a miracle and reach victory. I hoped that such a style of play would confuse Romana Ejbi, who, like many table tennis players, had no answer to a defensive style of play.

And indeed, a miracle happened that I myself could hardly believe. Milanka got her full revenge, winning the second set by the very same score by which she had lost the first, 21:7. Nor did Romana manage to find a solution in the third set either. True, in that third set she played somewhat better, but that did not stop Milanka from successfully bringing that decisive, and if you will, historic set to its conclusion. Confident of Milanka's victory, Mr. Izet Tamburić disappeared from the hall. He reappeared with three beautiful bouquets of red carnations just as the match referee was turning the scoreboard to the number 21, marking Milanka's triumph and the triumph of TTC "Borac" from Travnik. While congratulations were still being exchanged, I dashed to a telephone booth, called my wife, and informed her of the success we had achieved. In one breath I told her that we had won and that we would be arriving in Travnik around 5 p.m., and asked her to organize a welcome in front of the Hotel Orijent.

To be honest, I expected that many table tennis fans, sports fans in general, and citizens of Travnik would greet us in front of the hotel. We had achieved a historic result, presented the town of Travnik in the most favorable light, and the very least we deserved was a decent welcome. It is not immodest to say that we had indeed earned it. Yet nothing of the sort happened, to the shame of the town's leaders and sports fans who had no ear for such an exceptional achievement. Still, we were not left without congratulations from those dearest to us. In front of the hotel we were greeted, with fresh bouquets of spring flowers picked on the slopes of the lovely Bašbunar, by the youngest members of our club: Oljenka Kiso, Jadranka Vulić, Dijana Grgić, the sisters Adela and Linda Mešan, and Mrs. Elvica Mešan, who had organized that modest welcome. With sincere congratulations and kisses, they presented the bouquets to the victors: Milanka Kaurin, Sonja Solomun, Alma Sijamija, and Saliha Sojtarić. All of this was watched with astonishment by no small number of Travnik's citizens, who on that Sunday early evening were sitting in the garden of the Hotel "Orijent". Knowing me, many, out of curiosity, asked - once we too had sat down in the hotel garden - what wonderful thing had happened that we were celebrating. And our celebration consisted of a single drink shared together, with which, toasting one another, we congratulated each other on the town's sporting success. Happy that we had achieved a unique success, yet deeply hurt by the attitude of the town's leaders and its residents toward that achievement, we quickly finished our modest celebration and went our separate ways.

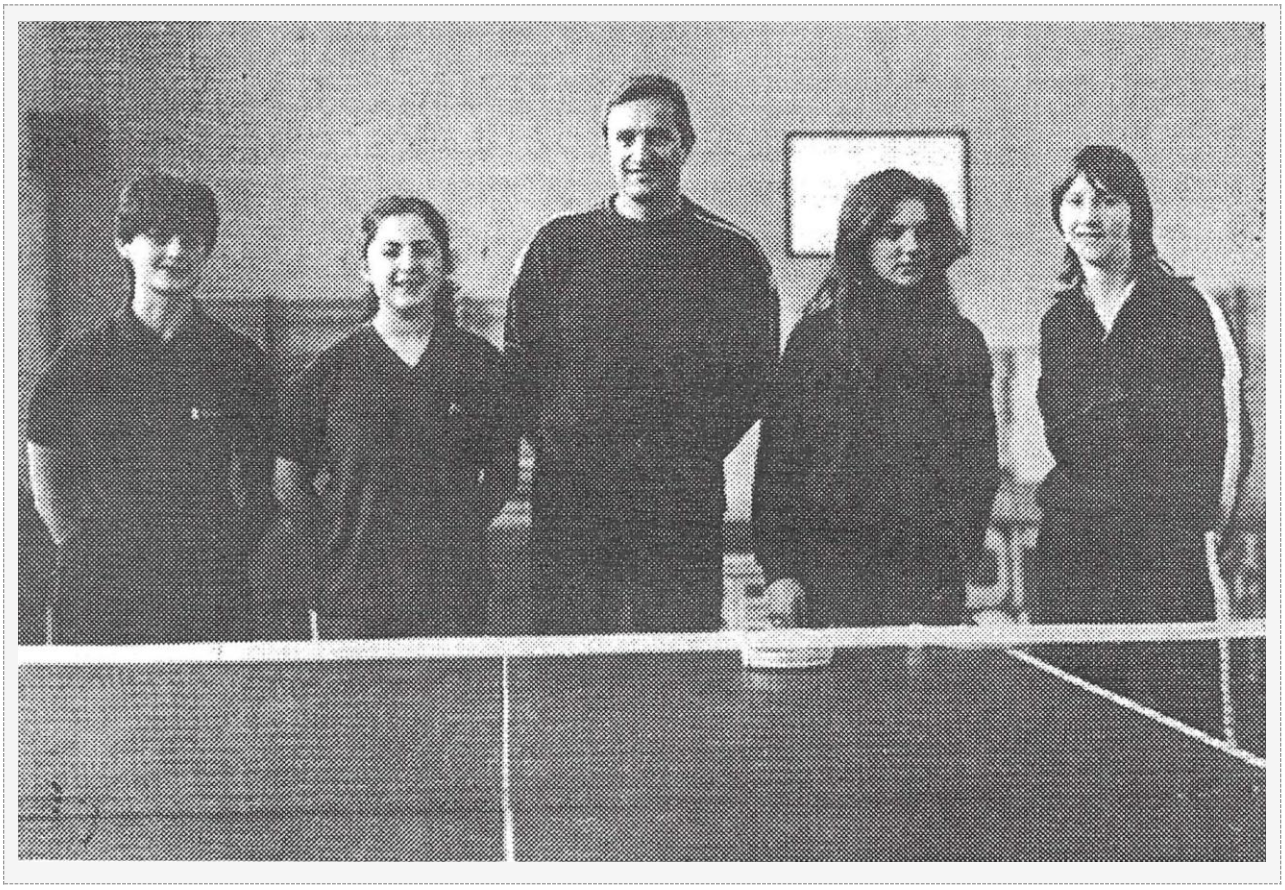
After a few days, many realized that they had been unfair toward the club and its members, who had, in the truest sense, been the best advertisement for one of the most beautiful towns of former Yugoslavia. Realizing that in Travnik sporting achievements outside of football were not valued, Mr. Izet Tamburić wrote a letter to all the social-political and economic organizations, in which he informed them in detail of the successes achieved and the problems TTC "Borac" faced daily, asking for help. To such an appeal, hard as it is to believe, not one of those informed found it fitting to respond, let alone to offer any form of assistance. Disappointed, Mr. Izet Tamburić, together with most of the members of the Presidency, gradually neglected the work of the club and disappeared from it altogether. Without Mr. Izet things were indeed very difficult for us, but I never held that decision against him.

It is worth saying something about the reception held for us at the Travnik Municipal Assembly, on the occasion of the success achieved. It is immodest, I know, but I must say that even that reception would not have come about had I not resorted to a small piece of cunning. I ran into a friend of mine, a man of standing of course, and mentioned to him, as if in passing, that we had entered the First League. Among other things, I noted that it would only be proper for the town's leading man to hold a reception for those responsible for that success. The invitation was not long in coming. We found ourselves in the reception rooms of the Travnik Municipal Assembly, and along with congratulations, Mr. Desimir Mitrić Zele presented each of us with a copy of the book "Travnik Chronicle", of which there was a great pile in one corner of the room we were in. That book was given as a keepsake to everyone who, for whatever reason, visited our town and afterward dropped by the municipal offices. With all due respect for the title of the Nobel laureate Ivo Andrić, at that moment I could not help but be struck by the thought of what would have happened had FC "Borac", by some chance, achieved a similar success. The "Babanovac" sports center on Vlašić would not have been able to hold the crowd of over a hundred invited guests. And as for the money that would have been spent on the deserving and on those who deserved it least, it is better not even to mention it. Invitations to such a reception would have gone even to those who had kicked a football just once, in an FC "Borac" jersey, on the "Pirota" stadium.

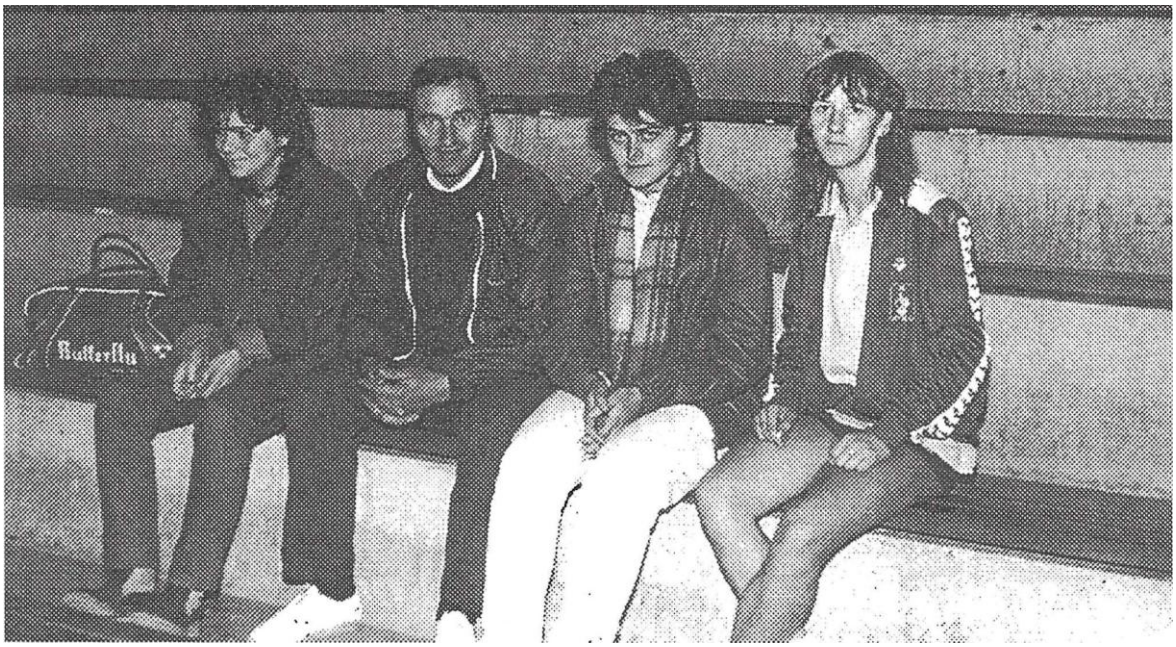
Those who know Travnik sport know exactly what I mean to say. But that is how it was at that time. And will it be so in the future? Let us hope that sport will be looked after by those who understand its importance and value every sporting success, whatever the discipline in which it is achieved.

In the First League we competed for only one season, which should not surprise you, dear readers. Besides the many misfortunes that beset us at that time, our best table tennis player, Sonja Solomun, was, for reasons unexplained to me, suspended by the club. Her place was taken by the talented sisters Adela (9 years old) and Linda Mešan (8 years old). No club in the world surely ever had such a young lineup in the highest rank of competition, and probably never will. That lineup was fit for the Guinness Book of Records. Still, the Mešan sisters drew attention to themselves, and everyone who watched them at the time predicted a brilliant table tennis career for them.

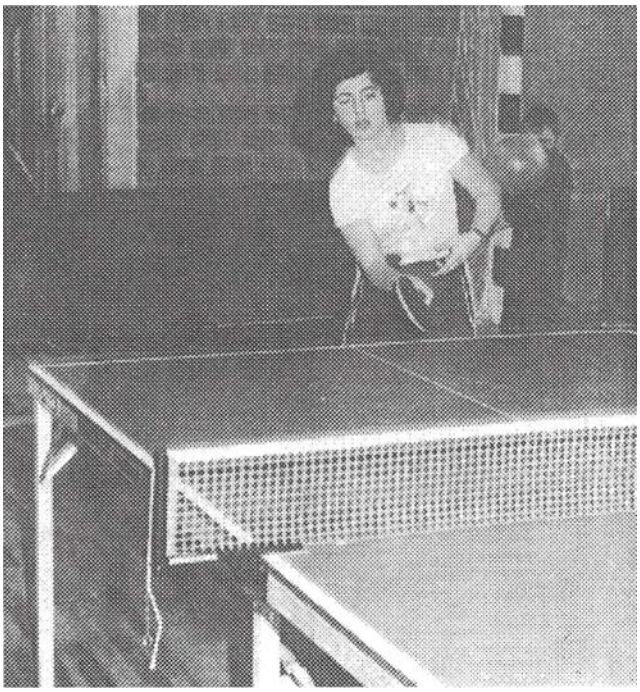
Defending the colors of our town in the First Federal League were: Sonja Solomun (suspended after two rounds played), Milanka Kaurin, Alma Sijamija, Saliha Sojtarić, and the sisters Adela and Linda Mešan. In the history of Travnik sport, the names of the members of TTC "Borac" will remain written in gold letters, for they achieved the greatest sporting success -- placement in the highest rank of competition, the First Federal League of former Yugoslavia -- something no sporting collective of the town of Travnik had managed before.



In the photograph, from left: Sonja Solomun, Alma Sijamija, Fadil Mešan (team coach), Milanka Kaurin, and Saliha Sojtarić.



A shot before one of the matches played by Sonja Solomun in the First Federal League. In the stands of the sports hall in Kikinda before the start of the match against the home team TTC "Kikinda". From left: Milanka Kaurin, Fadil Mešan (coach), Sonja Solomun, and Saliha Sojtarić.



Alma Sijamija surely ranks among the distinguished athletes of the town of Travnik. Her contribution to everything TTC "Borac" achieved was great. She did not break her ties with the club even at the time when she had heavy obligations at the Faculty of Medicine as a student. Today, as a doctor of medicine, she is at all times at the service not only of the members of TTC "Borac" but of all the athletes of the town.

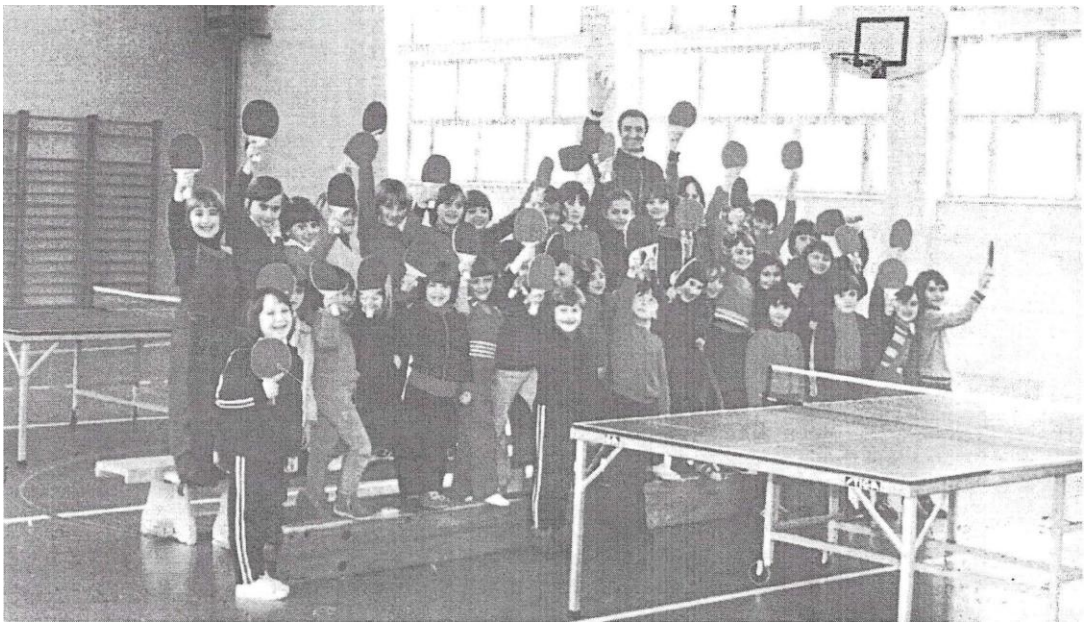
MR ESREF BEGOVAC, NEW PRESIDENT OF TTC "BORAC" TRAVNIK

At the end of 1983, an elective assembly of TTC "Borac" was held, at which the members of the former Presidency and the president were replaced. The new president became Mr Ešref Begovac, then president of the S.O. Travnik, while Mr Slobodan Šušljik remained in the position of secretary. We continued competing in the Second Federal League of former Yugoslavia with the lineup: Milanka Kaurin, Adela Mešan, and Linda Mešan, with whom we objectively could not maintain our status at that level. Saliha Sojtarić stopped playing table tennis for a time, and Milanka, together with the young and inexperienced Mešan sisters, could do nothing to preserve second-league status. We had to start again, just as we had back in 1972.

President Mr Ešref Begovac is extremely ambitious and strives by every possible means to raise TTC "Borac" to the level it deserves. With the wholehearted help of everyone in the club, especially Mr Slobodan Šušljik, he is succeeding in this. Mr Ešref also does a great deal for the promotion of men's table tennis. A new generation of boys is coming of age, among whom the following stand out in particular: Džemaludin Herceg, Zoran Šunjić, the brothers Ivan and Vjekoslav Visković, Miodrag Banjac... It would be unjust not to mention Mr Anto Šunjić, Tomislav Visković, and Kasim Herceg, members of the Presidency who worked hard and contributed greatly to resolving problems and raising the club to the level it had held not so long before. Our men's lineup competes in the Regional League but has never managed to reach the Republic League. The constant change of coaches (Bazdulj, Hočkić, Hodžić, Gegić, Herceg...) probably also contributed to the atmosphere that has always prevailed in men's table tennis. We have truly never lacked talent. But the results expected of that talent never came.

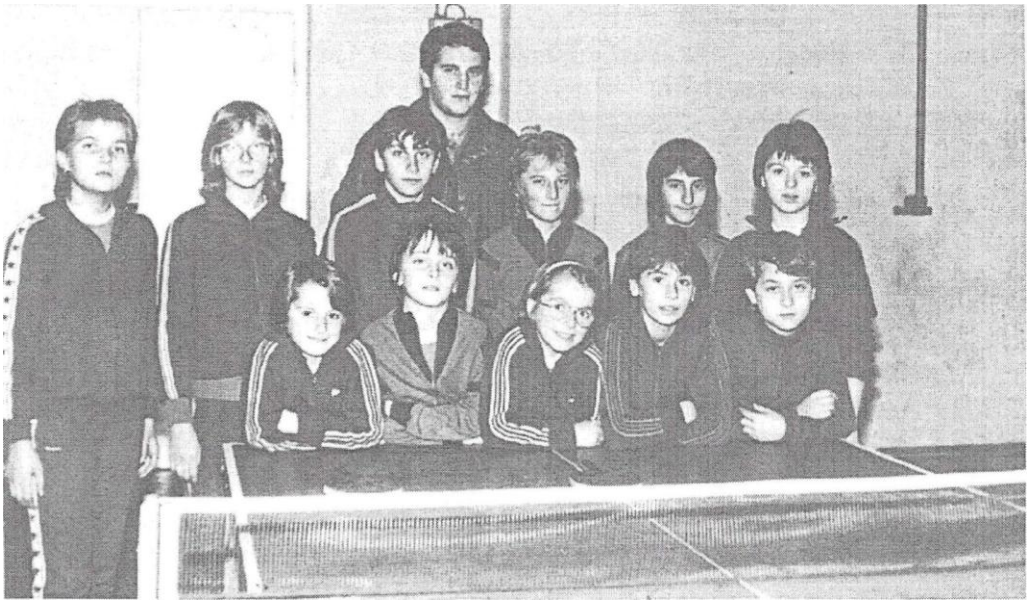
In women's table tennis the situation was quite different. From the club's founding in 1972 right up to the start of the war in 1992, the coach did not change. True, only for a month or two, when the already-described disagreement arose between the coach and the members of the Presidency. In the meantime I completed a two-year course of study at the FFK in Sarajevo and obtained a diploma with the title of Senior Table Tennis Coach. The work became more accomplished, which was felt from day to day. Oljenka Kiso, Jadranka Vulić, Amela Merdanović, and especially the sisters Adela and Linda, already meant something in the competition among the pioneer-age girls of Bosnia and Herzegovina. History repeats itself. We go to the same traditional competitions: Zagreb, Varaždin, Novi Sad, Umag, where Sonja Solomun, Mirna Halajkijević, and TTC "Borac" are still mentioned with respect. We compete in the senior league of our Republic, in which the young lineup of "Borac" gains the necessary experience. Already the following season we draw attention to ourselves, and many already see us as champions of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

When I again had to start from zero, it was said that I was tired of it all and surely no longer had enough motivation to achieve top-level results. Fortunately for the youngest ones, and for me too, that was not the case. On the contrary! We all wanted to bring back to the table tennis club the shine it had had in the time of the previous generation. We wanted to bring it once more to the position of the leading sporting collective in the town and the Republic. Since this generation went through a path identical to the previous one, I will mention only the most important things that happened in the period between 1982 and 2000, noting that we accepted an invitation to cooperate with the Polish table tennis club "Granit" from Strzelin, a cooperation that would last until the start of the war.



Few schools, not only in Bosnia and Herzegovina but in former Yugoslavia as well, had the kind of mass participation that the table tennis school of TTC "Borac" had. This is confirmed by the photograph in which you see the second generation of our table tennis school, from which the following stood out in quality: Oljenka Kiso, Jadranka Vulić, Amela Merdanović, and the sisters Adela and Linda Mešan.

At the time when disagreements arose between the Presidency and the coach, Mr Smail Hodžić took over the care of the women's team for a certain period. Mr Smail Hodžić is likewise among those who worked with great enthusiasm in TTC "Borac".



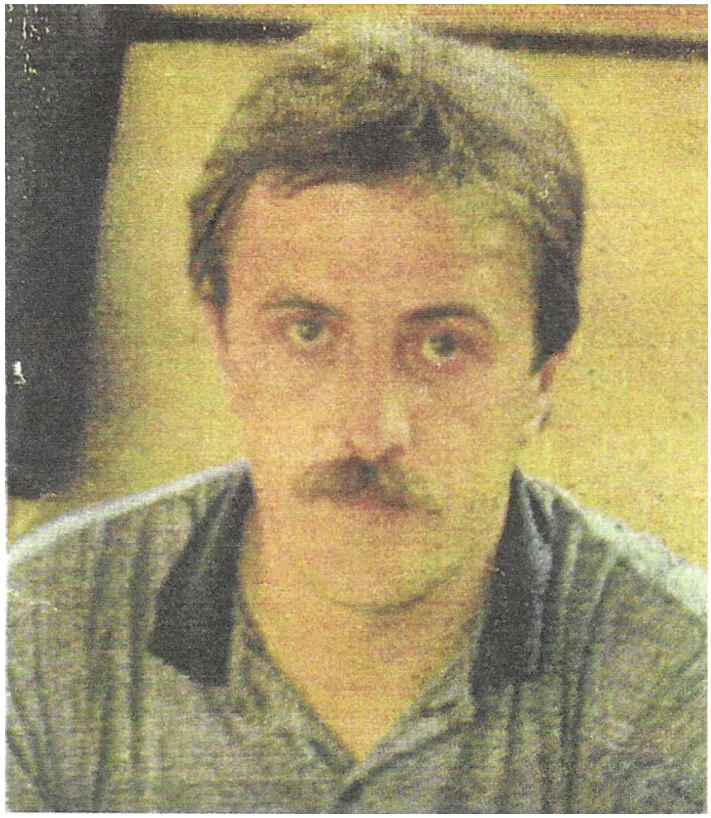
In the photograph, from left: Larisa Šutalo, Dijana Grgić, Sanja Vokić, Amela Merdanović, Oljenka Kiso, and Armina Bubalović (standing). Leaning on the table tennis table, from left, are: Adela Mešan, Belma Merdanović, Linda Mešan, Jadranka Vulić, and Mirta Dedić. Standing above is Mr Smail Hodžić.

COOPERATION WITH TTC "GRANIT" OF STRZELIN, POLAND

Over the eight years that Mr Ešref Begovac would spend at the head of TTC "Borac", he would not only make an enormous contribution to the promotion of the sport of table tennis, but thanks to him TTC "Borac" would also venture beyond the borders of former Yugoslavia. Cooperation was established with the Polish table tennis club "Granit" from Strzelin. Thus the members of TTC "Borac", besides sporting encounters, had the opportunity to get to know the most significant places and sights of Poland. This cooperation consisted of an annual visit to one another lasting ten to twelve days, with a previously prepared program for the stay. Thus our sporting friends got to know our town and its sights. They visited Sarajevo and Jajce, where they saw the beauty of those towns and got to know their sights. A special event, as they point out, was the trip to the slopes of the beautiful Vlašić and spending several days on Čiovo, where they enjoyed the beauties of the Adriatic.

The members of our club visited Warsaw, Wrocław, Kraków, and Katowice in Poland, and were convinced of the beauty and sights of those cities. They also visited the infamous Auschwitz, seeing all the horrors of the Second World War. A special impression on everyone was made by the visit to the royal castle and the salt mine, whose worked-out spaces at a depth of 150 meters have been converted into sports halls, souvenir shops, and spaces for filming movies. They toured the cathedral in Kraków, surely one of the most beautiful in Europe. From their hosts they also heard the legend about it. It tells that the Avars besieged Kraków for a long time, intending to conquer it. But the town was excellently fortified, and they never managed to capture it. So they tried to do it by cunning. They suddenly abandoned the siege and began to withdraw. When the last Avar had vanished from the defenders' sight, indescribable celebration broke out in the fortified Kraków. There was drinking, singing, and dancing. And when the celebration died down and the defenders, from excessive drinking, fell asleep, the Avars began silently approaching the walls of Kraków. One of the defenders nevertheless noticed them, quickly ran up to the top of the cathedral, and from there sounded the alarm on a trumpet. One of the attackers struck him in the neck with an arrow. However, the defenders had had enough time to prepare a successful defense. Today, in gratitude and in memory of the brave defender, a trumpeter sounds from the cathedral every hour, playing the same notes for exactly as long as the legendary defender of Kraków managed to do. After finishing the call (and the trumpeter performs it toward all four points of the compass), he waves to the numerous visitors. Visitors count the waves, for it is believed that however many waves you count, that many times you will return again to beautiful Kraków.

The visits ended with a table tennis meeting of sporting friends, followed by many lovers of table tennis. On the evening of the last day, a joint dinner was arranged, on which occasion gifts were exchanged. The war interrupted this fine and, above all, useful companionship. Let us hope that this is only temporary. The photographs on the following pages will surely tell you something about this unforgettable fellowship.



Mr Ešref Begovac, longtime president of TTC "Borac" Travnik, is most responsible for the sporting cooperation that came about with the Polish table tennis club "Granit" from Strzelin. He is one of those who have placed the town of Travnik in his debt through his dedication and his contribution to its sporting promotion.

Likewise, the longtime president of the table tennis club "Granit" from the Polish town of Strzelin, Mr Janusz Szablinski, deserves credit for bringing about the sporting cooperation between the two clubs. In the photograph, Mr Janusz Szablinski with his wife.

The friendship between the two table tennis clubs, TTC "Granit" and TTC "Borac", dates from June 1985. Let us hope the war has interrupted the sporting meetings of the two friendly towns only briefly. It will be resumed, there is no need to doubt that. In one of the first photographs, the members of TTC "Borac", while touring Strzelin, paused briefly and arranged a photograph for remembrance. Standing in the back row, from left: Džemaludin Herceg, Slobodan Šušljik, Zoran Šunjić, Nevzet (the driver of the bus in which we traveled), and Fadil Mešan. Crouching in the front row, from left: Ivan Visković, Adela Mešan, Jadranka Vulić, and Linda Mešan. Strzelin, 3 June 1985.

The table tennis players of TTC "Borac" had the special pleasure of being photographed with local women dressed in the traditional costume of that region. From left, in the front row: Adela Mešan, Fadil Mešan, Jadranka Vulić, and Linda Mešan. Strzelin, 3 June 1985.

The women's and men's lineups of TTC "Granit" from Strzelin, host of our club. Third from left is Berdnarska, a member of the Polish national team.

The women's and men's lineups of TTC "Borac" before the match against the host, TTC "Granit". From left: Zoran Šunjić, Ivan Visković, Džemaludin Herceg, Oljenka Kiso, Linda Mešan, Milanka Kaurin, Jadranka Vulić, Dijana Grgić, and Adela Mešan.

Before the start of the match in Strzelin, an exchange of souvenir badges and the presentation of a bouquet of flowers to the guests from friendly Travnik. In the photograph, the exchange is being carried out by the women's lineups.

Along with bouquets of flowers, the men's lineups of the friendly towns of Strzelin and Travnik carry out the exchange of badges and souvenirs.

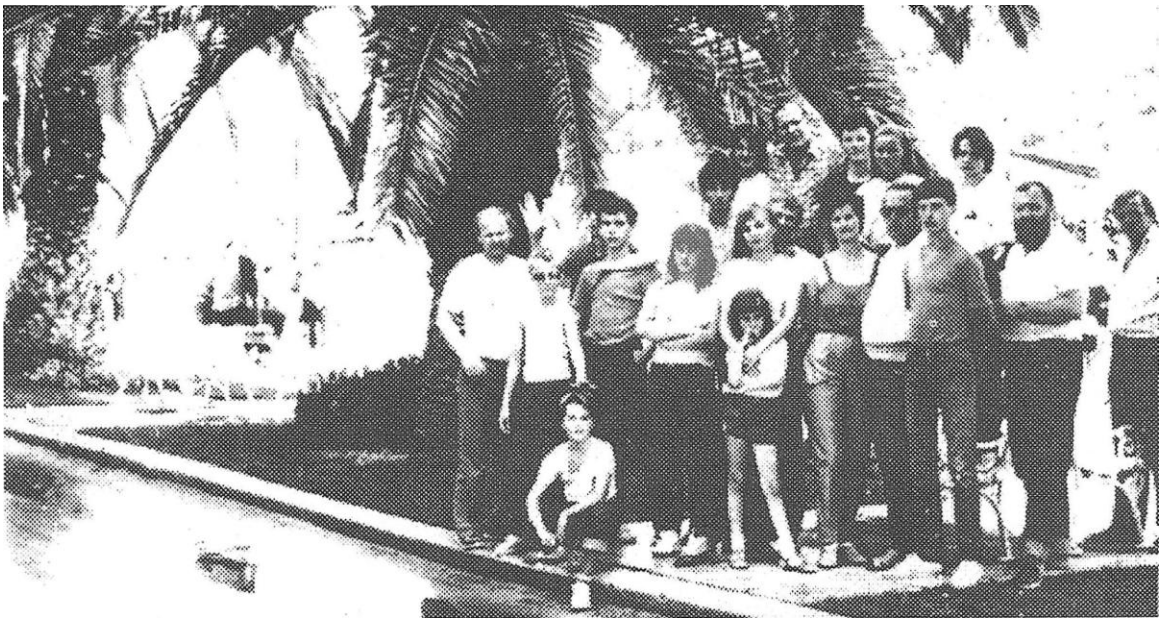
A member of the Presidency of TTC "Borac", one of the initiators of its founding and its longtime table tennis player, Mr Esad Kasumović, before the start of the match in Travnik between the women's lineups, presents a fitting gift to the youngest player of TTC "Granit" on the occasion of her birthday.

The generation of the sisters Adela and Linda Mešan, Oljenka Kiso, Amela Merdanović, Dijana Grgić, Jadranka Vulić, as well as Džemaludin Herceg, Zoran Šunjić, the brothers Ivan and Vjekoslav Visković, and others, will gladly remember the time when this photograph was taken. In the photograph, table tennis players of Granit from Strzelin and Borac from Travnik.

Milanka Kaurin, along with Saliha Sojtarić, is the only one from the generation that began playing table tennis in 1972 to remain in the club and help the new generation come of age. In the photograph, Milanka Kaurin stands at the far left with the youngest table tennis player of our club, Linda Mešan. Seated, from right: Adela Mešan, Jadranka Vulić, Dijana Grgić, and Amela Merdanović (during a break in the match between Borac and Granit).

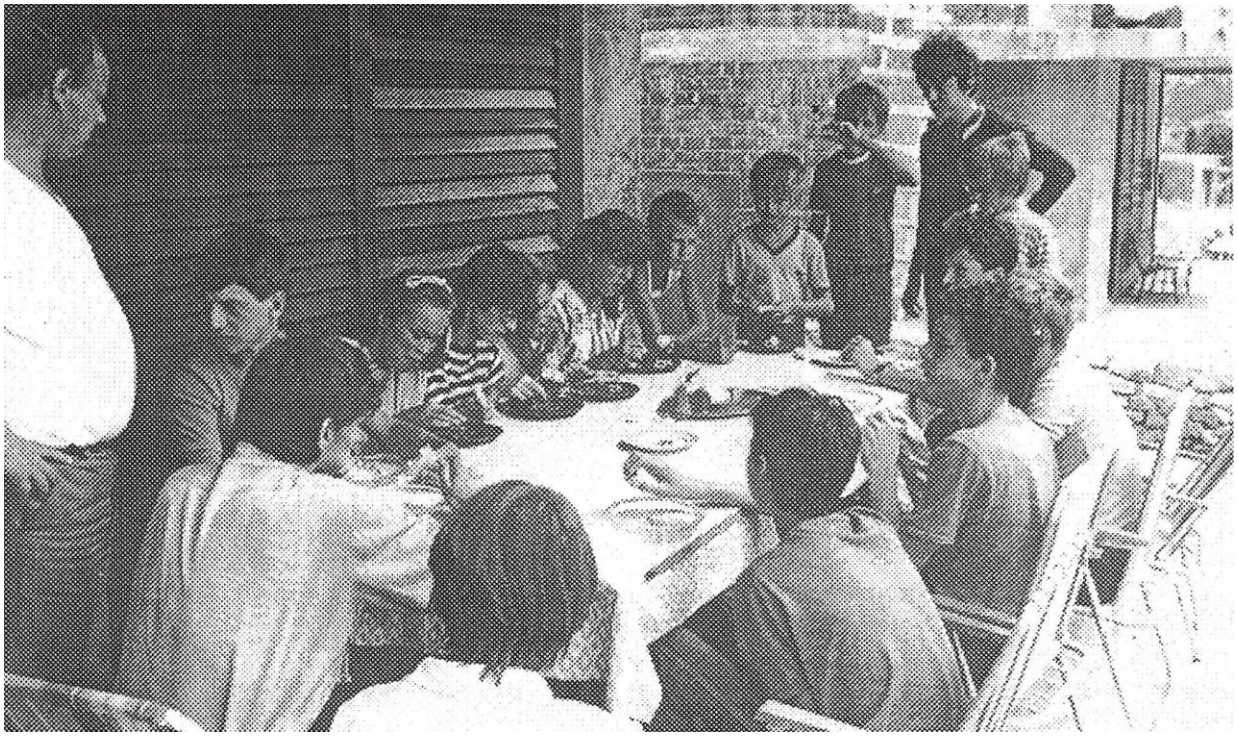
In 1986, on a visit to Strzelin, TTC "Borac" fielded the following table tennis players. From left: Miodrag Banjac, Ivan Visković, Vjekoslav Visković, Džemaludin Herceg, Zoran Šunjić, Jadranka Vulić, Amela Merdanović, Linda Mešan, Dijana Grgić, Oljenka Kiso, and Adela Mešan. At the very end, coach Fadil Mešan.

In the hall of Primary School "Braća Lolić", during the visit of friends from Poland, the sporting part of the program was held. Our table tennis players before one such match. From left, in the front row: Ivan Visković, Zoran Šunjić, Adela Mešan, Linda Mešan, Jadranka Vulić, Dijana Grgić, Oljenka Kiso, and Milanka Kaurin. In the back row, from left: Fadil Mešan (women's coach), Džemaludin Herceg, Esad Kasumović, and Sulejman Gegić (men's coach).



A special pleasure for the guests from friendly Strzelin was the trip to Čiovo, where they would stay three to four days, enjoying the beauty of the sea and the warmth of the sun. In the photograph, the guests from Strzelin on the waterfront in Trogir, 1986.

A special place in the companionship between the two table tennis clubs is held by Dr Ahmet Junuzovski, who met his life companion in Poland and settled there permanently. Throughout all the gatherings, Mr Ahmet was the right hand of both host and guest. He performed the role of interpreter to the satisfaction of both sides. It is interesting to know that Mr Ahmet expressly requested that the program of our stay in Strzelin always include a one-day stay for the guests, for whom he would be the host that day. And so it was. And you should know that, among many fine days, each of those days was the finest. In the photograph, Mr Ahmet Junuzovski in the company of his wife Stanislava and Elvica Mešan.



The Visković family, where all the table tennis players from friendly Strzelin came to Čiovo. Among them also several of our own. The fish, which Mrs Milka and Mr Tomislav prepared for the occasion, was enjoyed by both sides. True, at times the young guests struggled with the small bones, but that was no reason for the gathering at the Visković family's not to end in song and laughter. After that, the sea and the sun would delight them.

THIRTY-THIRD OPEN TABLE TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIP OF ZAGREB FOR PIONEER BOYS AND GIRLS, ZAGREB, 1986.

That we gained a great deal with the arrival of Mr. Ešref Begovac at the head of the club is shown by the fact that at that time we were one of the most organized clubs not only in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but in former Yugoslavia as well. At that time we had a table tennis school that only a handful of clubs in the country could boast of. Dozens of girls and boys attended that school.

Mr. Sulejman Gegić was appointed coach for the men's section, while I remained in charge of the women's. It is true that Mr. Sulejman would remain in that position only briefly, as he would soon move to Austria, which would again result in stagnation for men's table tennis in our town. As you can see, men's table tennis simply could not find its footing. Why that was so is unnecessary to explain here.

Our two teams arrived at the 33rd Zagreb Pioneer Table Tennis Championship. Mr. Sulejman Gegić led the boy pioneers, while I led the girl pioneers. Over seven hundred boy and girl pioneers from all parts of the former country took part.

Once again the boys failed to achieve a result worth mentioning, which was also true of the older girl pioneers' team, made up of Oljenka Kiso, Jadranka Vulić, Amela Merdanović and Sanja Vokić. However, in the team competition of the younger girl pioneers, the sisters Adela and Linda Mešan reached the championship title, so that their names and the name of TTC "Borac" were once again entered into the book in which, exactly ten years earlier, the names of Sonja Solomun, Mirna Halajkijević and our club had been entered.

At that championship we were also among those who stood out for their sheer numbers, something highly valued at that event. The women's team continued competing in the Republic League and held its own against all the teams in it. But once again it happened that, at the most inconvenient time, we were left by someone we needed most. This time it was, without doubt, one of those most responsible for everything achieved in our town's women's table tennis. Milanka Kaurin left us, continuing her table tennis career in Barcelona, playing for a club there for one year. After spending a year in Barcelona, she moved to Italy, where, alongside active play, she also served as coach of the table tennis team of the city of Messina.

No farewell match was arranged for Milanka, at which she could have been thanked for her thirteen years of loyalty and her immeasurable contribution to the results achieved by TTC "Borac". I attribute this unforgivable omission not only to the club's Presidency, but also to those who were responsible for sport in our town. Let it be some satisfaction to her that I will take this opportunity, on behalf of everyone who ever wore the table tennis jersey of TTC "Borac", on behalf of all lovers of table tennis and sport in our town, and personally, to thank her wholeheartedly for everything she did to make our town known not only across the former country, but far beyond it as well. And so I say, on behalf of all those mentioned, that the doors of our town and the doors of TTC "Borac" will always be wide open to her, and that she will be welcomed with the utmost honor and respect. Milanka Kaurin has earned that.

The greatest honor for a young table tennis player, male or female, is to step onto the winners' podium of the Zagreb Table Tennis Championship, certainly the strongest table tennis competition for young players anywhere in the former country. After Sonja Solomun, who stood on the winners' podium in 1976, that pleasure was also experienced by the sisters Adela and Linda Mešan, who in 1986 - that is, exactly ten years later - won first place in the team competition for younger girl pioneers. Thus TTC "Borac" was once again entered into the book reserved for only the best clubs and individuals.

In the photograph, the Mešan sisters, Linda on the left and Adela on the right, with the trophy and gold medals they won.

Zagreb, 1986

NATIONAL TABLE TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIP OF FORMER YUGOSLAVIA FOR GIRL AND BOY PIONEERS, UMAG, 1988

The year 1988, alongside 1976 and 1982, would remain especially memorable for the members of TTC "Borac" and the citizens of Travnik. That year, 1988, Umag hosted the National Table Tennis Championship for boy and girl pioneers, which competitors from our town also attended. The standings from that championship determined who would travel to Novi Sad, which had been given the organization of the European Table Tennis Championship for boy and girl pioneers that year. More precisely, the selector would choose the girls' national team, which would represent former Yugoslavia at that championship.

To be honest, only somewhere in a haze had I imagined one of our table tennis players in the national team. Realistically, it was reasonable to expect that the sisters Adela and Linda Mešan might reach the top eight, which would already be a success. And indeed, both of them reached the top eight. But the draw did not give both of them the chance to achieve anything more. In the quarterfinal they found themselves facing each other. And when the two of them play, the result is uncertain right to the end. So it was this time too. The younger Linda won, and in the semifinal she faced Karolina Kelemen, at that time the best girl pioneer in the former country, a member of TTC "Senta" from Senta. Linda played superbly against Karolina and sent the number one favorite into the stands, winning 2:1.

In the final, Linda faced Lidija Lang, a member of TTC "Ina" from Sisak. Linda played that match excellently too. She won one set and lost one. The third, deciding set was played. At a score of 16:10 in Linda's favor, the match referee removed me from the coach's bench and sent me up into the stands. To this day I am convinced he did this deliberately, wanting Linda to lose. Left without support from the bench, Linda managed to score only one more point in the rest of the set. The final result read 21:17 in favor of Lang, even though everyone present had already pictured Linda on the winners' podium. Still, even the runner-up title shone brilliantly, and Linda was a certain traveler to Novi Sad.

After the championship ended, Mr. Janez Stare, the selector of the girls' pioneer national team, determined who would travel to Novi Sad and gave instructions ahead of the joint training camp. For the first time in the history of table tennis, Travnik had gained a national team member.

We returned to Travnik happy about the success achieved, yet with regret over the lost championship title that had already been within our grasp. The success we achieved instilled in us a desire to work even more diligently and gave us hope of reaching the senior team title of our republic, which would have taken us into the Second Federal League - West.

Linda Mešan, representative of TTC "Borac" from Travnik, receives the trophy for the runner-up title won at the National Table Tennis Championship for girl pioneers held in Umag in 1988. By winning that title, Linda became the first and only person in the history of our town's table tennis to earn the jersey bearing the national emblem of former Yugoslavia. In the photograph, from left: championship winner Lidija Lang, Linda Mešan, and the president of the championship's organizing committee, who presented the trophies to the winners.

Participants of the pioneer table tennis championship of former Yugoslavia with the trophies and medals they won. A photograph to remember Umag, 1988. Second from the right, Linda Mešan.

EUROPEAN TABLE TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIP FOR GIRL AND BOY PIONEERS AND GIRL AND BOY JUNIORS, NOVI SAD, 1988

The national championship in Umag ended to the satisfaction of the members of TTC "Borac" and the true lovers of table tennis in our town. After the championship concluded, all four selections that would represent former Yugoslavia at the European Championship in Novi Sad were determined. The dates and locations for the training camps were also set. Radovljica in Slovenia and Kanjiža in Vojvodina would host our best young table tennis players, male and female, for a month. The final preparations would be organized in Novi Sad, and training sessions would also be held in the hall where the championship itself would take place. Here are the names of the members of all four selections.

Girl Pioneers:
Lidija Lang - Croatia
Linda Mešan - Bosnia and Herzegovina
Manca Sevšek - Slovenia
Tanja Nišavić - Slovenia

Boy Pioneers:
Slobodan Grujić - Vojvodina
Saša Ignjatović - Slovenia
Grgo Škafar - Slovenia
Boris Rihtarić - Slovenia

Girl Juniors:
Jasna Fazlić - Bosnia and Herzegovina
Polona Frelih - Slovenia
Nataša Brojčin - Vojvodina
Elizabeta Harča - Vojvodina

Boy Juniors:
R. Smrekar - Slovenia
N. Karković - Croatia
A. Kovač - Croatia
D. Atiković - Croatia
V. Šubonj - Vojvodina
M. Unger - Slovenia
D. Karlović - Croatia

The preparations were carried out successfully. The national team members were given three days of rest, after which they would complete the final part of their preparations in Novi Sad. I do not wish to burden you with the details of that championship, so I will only point out that at that championship the girls' pioneer national team, in which our Linda also played, achieved a satisfying tenth place. Such a placement was something everyone in the TTA of former Yugoslavia had hoped for. The selector, Mr. Janez Stare, was pleased with Linda's performance at that championship.

Our town also had a representative at the European Table Tennis Championship for boy and girl pioneers and juniors, held in Novi Sad in 1988. In the photograph, TTC "Borac" member Linda Mešan in the jersey of the national team of former Yugoslavia.

TABLE TENNIS CLUB "BORAC" TRAVNIK (WOMEN) IN THE INTER-REPUBLIC TABLE TENNIS LEAGUE OF FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

The period between 1988 and 1992 was largely devoted to work that would bring our club the title of champion of Bosnia and Herzegovina and entry into a higher tier: the Inter-Republic League of former Yugoslavia, and later the First Federal League. We were well on our way to achieving all of this. But the war prevented it. A war that spread from Slovenia to Croatia, and then to our own country, where it was at its bloodiest. In that senseless war, defending their homeland, many athletes would give their lives for its foundations, table tennis players among them.

During that period, we achieved entry into the Inter-Republic League, in which teams from Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina competed. We earned our place in that league through qualifiers, having previously won the title of champion of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The qualifiers were held in Zagreb, organized by TTC "Miškina" Zagreb, in June 1990. The following three teams took part in the qualifiers: TTC "Miškina" Zagreb, TTC "Jesenice" from Jesenice, and TTC "Borac" from Travnik. We convincingly defeated both opponents and became members of the aforementioned league. Our lineup at those qualifiers consisted of the sisters Adela and Linda Mešan, Samela Bašić, and Vanja Šantić.

We competed in the Inter-Republic League for only one season, 1990/91, because Slovenia broke away from former Yugoslavia, and its sports teams did the same, withdrawing from all competitions in the leagues of former Yugoslavia. This led to a reorganization in all sports, table tennis included. In place of the Inter-Republic League, a unified Second Federal League was formed, made up of teams from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Vojvodina, Kosovo and the Republic of Macedonia. Interestingly, all the member teams of the league prepared well and brought in table tennis players from China, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria... for their clubs. Only the first part of the competitive season was held, in which we achieved a good fourth place. That part of the competition was played as a tournament lasting three days. The league consisted of 10 (ten) clubs. The tournament was held at the time the war was spreading from Slovenia into Croatia. It was already clear then that the continuation would never take place.

Montenegro and Serbia tried in a brutal manner to keep Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia within Yugoslavia. But regardless of all the horrors these two countries endured, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia obtained UN recognition of their independence within their existing borders. Despite that recognition, the war raged on in both countries with full force. This did not stop athletes and sports officials from continuing their sporting activities even under such conditions, showing the aggressor that these countries had existed, existed still, and would continue to exist.

In 1992, the Table Tennis Association of Bosnia and Herzegovina was admitted, first as an associate member, and immediately afterward as a full, equal member of the ETTU and the ITTF. It was also the first sports federation to succeed, that year, in bringing its athletes onto the international stage. How important that was at the time needs no explanation. Reading the following pages, you will draw many of your own conclusions.

From the very beginning of the war, Travnik table tennis made a great contribution to the fight against the aggressor. The best confirmation of this is the appearance of its table tennis players on the international stage.

A group photograph after the successful qualifiers and the placement into the Inter-Republic League. Standing from left: Vanja Šantić, Linda Mešan, Samela Bašić, Adela Mešan and Elvica Mešan. Below, from left: Fadil Mešan and Eno Halilović. (Zagreb, 1990).

The table tennis team of TTC "Borac" that competed in the Inter-Republic League. From left: Linda Mešan, Adela Mešan, Vanja Šantić and coach Fadil Mešan.

TTC "BORAC" TRAVNIK - activities during the war

The war had already engulfed our country when the news arrived that table tennis players from our country could take part in all international competitions.

Much has already been written about the war and its horrors, so I will only say that hundreds of thousands of victims fell, and among them, many athletes, table tennis players included, gave their lives for the foundations of Bosnia and Herzegovina. TTC "Borac", like other sports collectives of our country, contributed through its members to the struggle for the final liberation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Engaging in sport at a time when the aggressor was trying by every means to destroy our people was a sign that this people was not afraid of him and that victory would in the end belong to them. And that is exactly what the members of TTC "Borac" did. Each of these members contributed in some way to the defense of the country, and many stood in the front defensive lines. In similar circumstances our people say, "Some mow the hay, others carry the water." Both, equally, contribute to accomplishing the task at hand.

The Table Tennis Association of Bosnia and Herzegovina was the first among sports federations to succeed in securing admission into the European and world sports associations, thereby giving its athletes the opportunity to appear on the international stage. At the time, that was a significant victory. During that period, dedicated table tennis workers, led by the president of TTC "Borac", Mr. Sead Žerić, continued their sporting activities. Incredibly, plans were already being made at that time to hold competitions that would produce teams and individuals to represent us on the international stage.

And before such thinking could be realized, our table tennis players managed to compete at an international championship, thus becoming the first athletes to carry the flag and coat of arms bearing the golden lilies on their chests and present the world with the newest member of the UN. This was in July 1992, in the then-Czech town of Topolčany, at the European Table Tennis Championship for youth and juniors.

The then president of the Table Tennis Association and the Olympic Committee, Mr. Stjepan Kljujić, gave me the task of bringing the junior women's national team of Bosnia and Herzegovina to that competition. Given such a task, I immediately set out in search of everything that Czechoslovakia might offer for telling the truth about our people's just struggle against Montenegrin-Serb aggression. In that search, great help was given to me by Mr. Meho Čorhodžić, the head of the "Borac" combine. He immediately arranged for a flag to be sewn, procuring a great deal of material bearing the emblem of our young state. A major problem was obtaining the funds needed for the trip. Here I received great help from Mr. Senad Džonlić, who, it seems to me, was one of the few who knew how to appreciate the significance of our athletes' appearance at the European Championship.

Before departing for Topolčany, the president of the Children's Embassy in Travnik, Dr. Nura Bazdulj, gave me a letter from the children of Travnik, in which they demanded an end to the senseless war and a life equal to that led by children in all free countries. Along with the letter, she gave me a tapestry, the work of Ms. Anita Mikić, whose image likewise spoke of peace in the world. At the opening of the European Championship, Linda Mešan presented the letter and the tapestry to the president of the organizing committee, Mr. Otto Macković.

We arrived in Topolčany amid great interest from the local media. The local newspapers wrote about our arrival at the European Championship, the radio reported it, and in the prime-time news broadcast, television announced the arrival of the Bosnia and Herzegovina national team and noted that, by taking part in this competition, it was contributing to the struggle for its country's freedom.

The championship opened with a ceremonial parade of the participants, in which one member of each team carried the flag of the country he represented. Forgive me for pointing out that the flag with the golden lilies was the most beautiful. Perhaps others, who likewise thought their own the most beautiful, did not share my opinion. But I did not see a more beautiful one that day. If I add that this was its first presentation to Europe and the world, then it is entirely clear why I saw it that way. And the pride that Linda and I felt at that moment is indescribable. Throughout the championship, Linda and I wore the coat of arms with the golden lilies on our sports kit. Knowing that, by competing in Topolčany, we had entered the history of our country's table tennis as the town that produced its first national representative made us even prouder.

At that championship we did not merely display our identity. We showed that we had mastered the secrets of the game of table tennis. In the first round Linda defeated Greece's best junior, Vafea, while in the second round she lost to one of the best juniors in Europe, Hungary's Fazekaš, showing in that match too that she could hold her own against the very best. A men's team also took part in the aforementioned championship, but it did not include any members of our club, and it should be noted that it did not even appear on the first day of competition. The women's team consisted of only two members: Linda Mešan, the competitor, and myself as coach. The mission the two of us had was accomplished in the best possible way, to the satisfaction of the TTA of Bosnia and Herzegovina and TTC "Borac" of Travnik, of which Linda and I are members.

Sport played a very significant role in the war that was forced upon us and was, above all, bloody. Sports clubs and their athletes contributed in the best possible way to the struggle for final liberation. At competitions around the world, athletes were exceptional ambassadors of their country, telling those they met on the sporting field the truth about our people's just struggle against the aggressor. TTC "Borac" made a great contribution to that struggle. The men's team represented Bosnia and Herzegovina in the "Nancy Evans" Cup, where it faced the Italian team "Lib. Alfaterna" from Salerno. True, they were defeated at the table tennis table by the better Italian side, but they were great in telling the truth about the war our people were waging at that time. If we add that the entire women's national team, including the coach, consisted of members of TTC "Borac", it becomes clear how much that club contributed to the affirmation of the country, not only in the sporting sphere but in terms of its general standing as well.

Before leaving for the European Championship, Linda Mešan addressed her fellow townspeople through the newspaper "Travnička ratna hronika" (Travnik War Chronicle). The text follows in full:

"As I leave for the European Table Tennis Championship, to be held in Czechoslovakia, and leave behind my homeland, which is living through difficult days, I feel the need to address my fellow townspeople. All the letters written so far, including this one of mine, will change nothing, yet they still represent support for those who are now probably in shelters and for those in the defensive lines. With this letter I address in particular my peers, the future of our country. I call on them to become engaged, in whatever way they can, in the defence of this, our only homeland, and to fight against the forces of evil that are seizing the territories of this country, failing to understand that people belong to the land, not the land to people, and that it cannot be bought or conquered. I call on them to prove that Bosnia is a land of love, not of hatred, as Ivo Andrić said in his story, and that national, cultural and religious diversity is not an obstacle but a bridge toward progress. Through my performance at this championship, under the flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina and with its coat of arms on my chest, I shall try to prove exactly that, and in this way contribute to the struggle for a free and independent Bosnia and Herzegovina."

Your fellow townswoman, Linda Mešan.

Linda Mešan is the first table tennis player of our young state to carry its coat of arms with the golden lilies at an international championship. This brings honour not only to her, but to her town and to TTC "Borac", where she came up through the ranks. In the photograph, Linda Mešan during one of her many appearances for the national team.

Mr. Sead Žerić deserves great credit for the fact that table tennis continued to be played even during the fiercest fighting in our region. He has been president of TTC "Borac" for a number of years now and strives with all his strength to restore its former standing. Thanks to his efforts, TTC "Borac" acquired premises of its own for the first time in its history, finally resolving a key problem.

Mr. Džemaludin Herceg belongs to the second generation of the TTC "Borac" table tennis school, and is the first from that generation to now pass on his knowledge of the sport to today's generation. He ranks among those table tennis players of our town who made a great contribution to the development of the sport, not only in Travnik but in our country as a whole. Džemaludin is also one of the athletes who defended the homeland on the front lines. In the photograph, Mr. Džemaludin Herceg at the time when he wore the jersey of TTC "Borac" as its best table tennis player.

It would be unfair not to mention the help given to us by the Table Tennis Association of Croatia before our appearance at the European Championship. They invited us to a joint seven-day training camp, which we held in Crikvenica. Once the preparations were complete, we travelled to Czechoslovakia together with their national team. The costs of the preparations and the trip were covered by the Table Tennis Association of Croatia. I take this opportunity to offer my most sincere thanks to that association, especially to Mr. Reni Marolt, Žarko Ratković, and the president of the "Mladost" table tennis club from Zagreb, Mr. Fiolić.

In Topolčany we received an invitation to move to Zagreb so that Adela and Linda could play in Croatia's strongest table tennis league. We accepted the offer, and for one year Adela (for TTC "Vodovod" of Osijek) and Linda (for TTC "Mundus" of Varaždin) competed in that league.

In Zagreb I learned, reading "Sportske Novosti", that the TTA of Bosnia and Herzegovina had authorized Mr. Đuro Žifko, a permanent resident of Luxembourg, to handle all administrative matters on its behalf and to submit entries for all international championships. I got in touch with Mr. Žifko by telephone, and in a fairly long conversation we concluded that it would be good to form a men's and a women's national team and bring them onto the international stage. In this way, alongside other sports, table tennis too would contribute to the overall struggle for the liberation of the homeland.

Mr. Žifko entrusted me with all responsibility for forming the women's team, while he took charge of the men's. For a little more than two years I would serve as coach of the women's national team, taking part with it in world, European and numerous international competitions, and in a certain sense being a sporting ambassador for my country. I am extremely proud of everything that team achieved. Of the international competitions our national teams took part in, I will mention only the most important details.

At that time, table tennis activity continued in our country. Table tennis clubs operated under extremely difficult conditions, defying the aggressor. A good illustration of this is provided by the following example involving the sons of Mr. Faruk Sijerčić, a member of the Presidency of TTC "Bosna" from Sarajevo. At the time when Chetniks attacked the unarmed population of the "Grbavica" neighbourhood, everyone leaving their home took with them only the most essential things. Mr. Faruk's sons, Nedim (eight years old) and Nihad (eleven years old), took with them only their table tennis rackets, considering them the most precious thing they owned. This story was told to me by Mr. Midhat Uštović, the selector of the Bosnia and Herzegovina table tennis national teams, and there were certainly more cases like it.

A man who undoubtedly did a great deal for the affirmation of table tennis in our country is Mr. Đuro Žifko. Thanks above all to Mr. Žifko, the TTA of Bosnia and Herzegovina was the first of all the sports associations to be admitted into the world and European associations. Without his diligence, this would certainly have proceeded very slowly. Besides the administrative work, which was very complex at that time, Mr. Žifko also carried out the duties of a coach. Throughout the entire war he looked after our country's men's national team, and not infrequently the women's team as well. Many of our national teams' appearances were financed by Mr. Žifko.

In the photograph, Mr. Đuro Žifko in front of the hall where the European Senior Table Tennis Championship was held. Birmingham, 24 March 1994.

APPEARANCES ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE

I know you will ask what appearances on the international stage have to do with the title of a book about the history of table tennis in the town of Travnik. It is precisely these appearances that wrote the brightest moments of table tennis in our town, from the day it began to be played right up to the present. It is enough to look at the composition of our country's women's national team at these events, from the first one held in 1992 up to today, and that look will give you the answer. To put it more plainly, from the very first appearance, two-thirds of the women's national table tennis team of Bosnia and Herzegovina have been made up of table tennis players from Travnik.

I have already mentioned that, thanks above all to Mr. Đuro Žifko, we entered the international stage. The first appearance of the senior national teams awaited us in Bratislava, where the international championship of the Slovak Republic was soon to be held.

INTERNATIONAL TABLE TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIP OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC, BRATISLAVA, 18 TO 21 FEBRUARY 1993

At that time it was difficult to put together the best possible team, for either side. Why? It was the year when it was already well known who stood for a whole and indivisible Bosnia and Herzegovina, and who stood against it. Differing views on this matter led many table tennis players, both men and women, into the aggressor's country, while some found themselves as refugees in neighbouring Croatia. Those better acquainted with such and similar cases will surely write about this.

At the international competition in Slovakia, the team consisted of two members each. The women's lineup was as follows: Adela Mešan, Linda Mešan, and coach Fadil Mešan. The men's lineup consisted of: Muhamed Mehmedović, Tarik Hodžić, Remhad Hasanović, and coach Đuro Žifko. It is worth noting that the entire women's national team consisted of members of TTC "Borac" of Travnik, while the men's team, apart from the coach, consisted of members of TTC "Vitez" of Vitez.

Here too many will shake their heads, because the entire (women's) national team consisted of members of the Mešan family. However, genuine table tennis enthusiasts and those familiar with the quality of table tennis in Bosnia and Herzegovina at that time will have no objection to this lineup. And the fact that they are right is confirmed by the circumstance that the Mešan sisters, both then and today, are the first ladies of table tennis in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They earn that title by the fact that, from their first appearance at the national championships right up to today, the two of them have played each other in the final.

When one speaks of oneself in a positive light, the speaker appears immodest in the eyes of those listening. I earned the position of national team coach through my work in table tennis and the results I achieved over that not exactly short period. And a diploma as a senior sports coach in this discipline gave me an advantage over others who likewise deserved to be coaches of the national team.

The table tennis players who made up the men's national team played for clubs in Belgium (Mehmedović and Hodžić) and in Germany (Hasanović) respectively. Adela and Linda played in Croatia.

Our national teams were received by the organizers in a truly outstanding and very friendly manner. On this occasion too, as in Topolčany, the media devoted most of their attention to our men's and women's national teams. We were a constant target for numerous photojournalists, reporters, and radio and television correspondents. We gave a series of interviews in which we spoke about the situation in our country and the aggressor's savage attack on our country. We spoke of the atrocities committed by the aggressor against the innocent population: rapes, the killing of children, the elderly and the helpless, the destruction of everything that in even the smallest degree betrayed a Bosniak or Croat identity... On that occasion, it could be seen on the faces of the journalists and those present that they stood with Bosnia and its people. It was clear that they had received accurate information, since before interviewing our members they had spoken of Serbian propaganda, which sought, at any cost, to convince the world that what it was doing in Bosnia and Herzegovina was justified.

That, alongside Bosnia and Herzegovina and its just struggle for freedom, the Slovak government and its people showed their solidarity in the fact that they later took in a large number of our people, providing them assistance in every form. We were proud to be able to contribute, in this way too, to the struggle for a free Bosnia and Herzegovina.

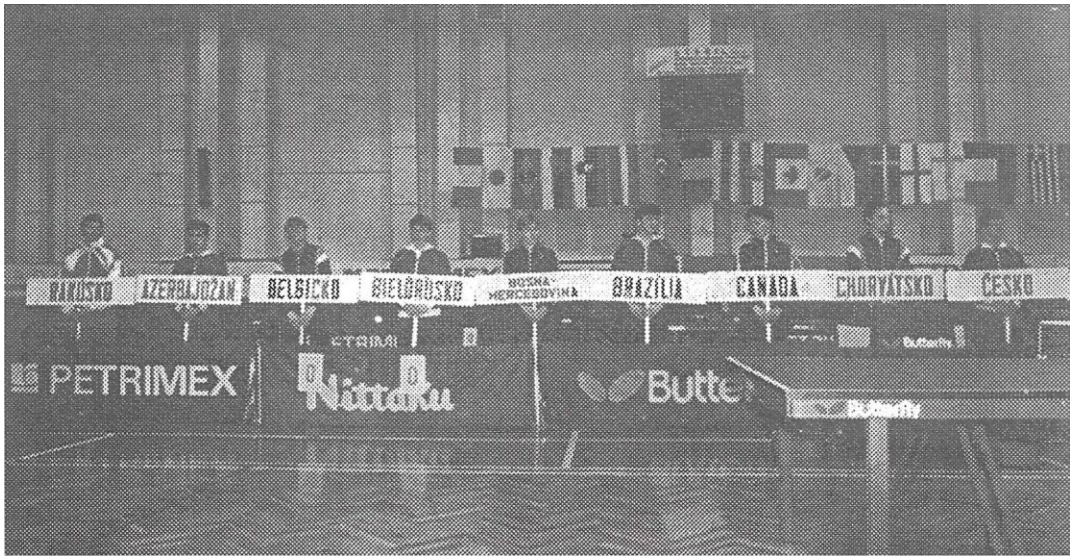
The national team of the aggressor Yugoslavia also arrived for the competition in Bratislava, which did not suit us at all. They had not previously taken part in team competitions and were not allowed to wear any Yugoslav insignia on their jerseys. Their women's team consisted of the Bosnian players Jasna Fazlić and Fatima Isanović. We wanted, and the organizer also tried as far as possible, to avoid a meeting with their competitors. Still, it happened that in the first round our youngest player (Hasanović) met their oldest (Kalinić). All contact between the two of them consisted of a sporting handshake after the match ended. Fortunately, there were no other encounters.

Nor were the results we achieved on that occasion anything to be underestimated. Adela and Linda brought our national team its first victories and advanced to the second round, both in singles and in doubles. Linda defeated the best Danish player, Pernille, and earned the unique opportunity to face the legendary Popova, a multiple European champion. Linda lost that match by the expected 3:0, but to the satisfaction of everyone present she played very well. We all congratulated her on her good play, but the congratulation from Popova pleased her most of all. Adela was eliminated from further competition by the French table tennis player Coubat. In doubles, Adela and Linda defeated the host pair Placha-Vochovchova, but suffered defeat in their second match against a pair from the Czech Republic. In the men's draw, the first round pitted our players against opponents from the top half of the world rankings. Mehmedović lost to the eventual tournament winner, the Czech Peter Korbel, by a respectable 3:2. Hodžić was likewise defeated by a representative of the Czech Republic. This first appearance under the flag and coat of arms with the golden lilies earned a passing grade.

Our senior national team made its first international appearance, under the flag and coat of arms with the golden lilies, in Bratislava at the international championship of the Slovak Republic in 1993. In the photograph, the women's team before the match against the hosts. From right: Linda Mešan, Adela Mešan and coach Fadil Mešan. (all members of TTC "Borac" Travnik). Bratislava, 1993.

In the photograph, the Bosnia and Herzegovina men's team before the match against the Czech Republic. From left: Đuro Žifko (coach), Tarik Hodžić, Remhad Hasanović and Muhamed Mehmedović. (all except the coach are members of TTC "Vitez" from Vitez).

At the international championship of the Slovak Republic, the local media devoted a great deal of space to our national teams. In the photograph, sisters Adela (left) and Linda Mešan (right) in a match against the Czech Republic pair, Placha and Vachovchova, who won the match by a score of 2:1.



At the international championship of the Czech Republic, among the flags of the participating countries stood ours too, with the golden lilies. And that was proof to the aggressor that Bosnia had existed, that it existed, and that it would continue to exist. In the photograph, part of the banners bearing the names of the participating countries, among which is the flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

42ND WORLD TABLE TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIP FOR SENIOR MEN AND WOMEN, GOTHENBURG, 12-24 MAY 1993

The world championship in Gothenburg was the first, and therefore also historic, at which the national team of Bosnia and Herzegovina appeared. That championship will remain in the lasting memory of all of us who took part in it. It will be remembered not only because, for all of us, it was the first world championship we took part in, but also because it fell to us to have the honor of representing Bosnia and Herzegovina before the whole world. Besides that, we were the first Bosnia and Herzegovina national team in any sport to compete at a world championship.

We had not expected to be showered with media attention here as we had been in Bratislava. However, we were pleasantly surprised by what the local media had in store for us. It is hard to believe that in the newspapers, on radio and on television we received more coverage than all the participating countries except, of course, the host country Sweden. There was hardly a day when we were not mentioned in the local papers, which carried interviews with our players and coaches along with fitting photographs. It was a particular surprise for them to learn that the colors of Bosnia and Herzegovina were being defended together by: the Bosniaks Muhamed Mehmedović and Tarik Hodžić, the Serb Nenad Stevanović and the Croat Boris Pranjković among the men, and the Bosniak sisters Adela and Linda Mešan, together with the Croat Vanja Šantić among the women, while back home these same peoples were fighting one another. Precisely such a composition of the Bosnia and Herzegovina team gave the true answer to the question: "Who is the aggressor, and who is the victim?" As you can see, we were a constant target of the media, which at that moment mattered more than the results. This time too, the results were truly of secondary importance, especially given that we had come to that championship without having held any joint preparations beforehand.

Here something should be mentioned that will not please the then members of the Presidency of the TTA of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In fact, for reasons that remain unclear, just before the women's team's departure for Gothenburg, they gave Mr. Đuro Žifko the task of cancelling its participation. You can imagine how those who were preparing to proudly represent their country in far-off Sweden felt at that moment. At that time the media of neighboring Croatia were also reporting in detail on the departure of the Bosnia and Herzegovina women's team for the world championship. Sporting friends congratulated us and did everything they could to help us as much as was possible at the time. That things did not turn out the way certain individuals wanted them to — individuals to whom it did not suit at all that the women's team should also compete — is to the credit of Mr. Đuro Žifko. He had faith in the Mešan sisters and Vanja Šantić and gave the green light for the trip to Sweden. And you should know, he was not mistaken. What remained for me was to arrange the travel costs and accommodation for five people. Mr. Enver Hadžiabdić-Eki happened to be in Zagreb at the time, and he directed me to certain people in Sweden, after which everything went smoothly. In cooperation with Mr. Suljo Halalkić, president of the "Bosnia and Herzegovina" association in Sweden, I arranged accommodation and meals. Mr. Zdravko Šantić, through the Slovenian firms "IBL" and "Hermes-Softlab", arranged five round-trip tickets on the Ljubljana-Gothenburg route. As can be seen, the TTA of Bosnia and Herzegovina did nothing at all for the women's team's appearance at the world championship in Sweden. Let that stand to their credit.

RECEPTION FOR THE TABLE TENNIS NATIONAL TEAMS OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AT THE AIRPORT AND IN THE PORT OF GOTHENBURG

The reception given to the members of the women's team by our compatriots permanently settled in Sweden, at the airport in Gothenburg, cannot be described in words. It had to be experienced. I will try to describe to you at least part of the atmosphere that prevailed on that occasion at the airport. As we waited for our bags on the conveyor belt, a thunderous chant reached us: "Bosnia, Bosnia", followed by the song "Bosno moja divna mila, lijepa gizdava" ringing out. At first we could not quite take in the excitement that overcame us, nor work out from which direction the sounds of that beautiful song were coming. When at last we turned our eyes toward the gallery of the airport building, our joy knew no bounds. From the gallery, dozens of people waved to us, flying flags with the golden lilies, amid thunderous cries of Bosnia-Bosnia. They waited for us at the exit of the airport building, where they presented us with beautiful bouquets of flowers. Why hide it — there was singing, our Bosnian songs, and there were tears of joy that here, in far-off Sweden, a national team of Bosnia and Herzegovina had appeared, and tears of sorrow over the situation in which that country found itself. After a brief outpouring of emotion, we got into the cars of what were now our hosts. They drove us to a restaurant, where over dinner they also presented us with the plan for our stay in Gothenburg. On that occasion, Mrs. Sabina Pašić, on behalf of the members of the "Bosnia and Herzegovina" association, handed us an envelope with pocket money, wishing us a pleasant stay in Sweden. Both then and throughout our stay, we were touched by the attention our compatriots showered upon us. There we also agreed on the details of the reception for the men's team, who were due to arrive in Gothenburg by ship the next day from the German port of Kiel.

The next day we arrived at the port of Gothenburg half an hour before the docking of the ship on which our players were to arrive. We spent that half hour with our Bosnian songs and flags and banners unfurled. And when the ship, carrying the members of the men's team, docked and our players appeared from it, there was no end to the joy. Throughout our entire stay in Gothenburg, care of the women's team was taken by members of the "Bosnia and Herzegovina" association, headed by its president Mr. Suljo Halalkić and Mrs. Sabina Pašić. The owners of the exclusive restaurants "Dubrovnik" and "Upitnik", the brothers Fera and Nera Listo and Sejo Malkoč, fed the members of both teams free of charge for the entire duration of the championship, even though the men's team had everything provided at their hotel. Daut Pašić-Dudo drove the women's team the whole time in his own car, from where they were staying to the hall where the world championship was taking place. And that was more than fifty kilometers every single day. Along with those named, Emira, her brother Emir, Dugi and many others will also remain in the memory of both teams for their kindness.

Upon learning that our national team brought together Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks, a Swedish humanitarian organization called "Peace" presented us, through its representative Miss Dijana Pucar, with a tasteful diploma and flowers, in recognition of everything we were doing toward peace prevailing in the world.

VM-EXTRA

ONSDAG 12 MAJ 1993

NEDERLAG SVIDER ALLTID

Flytt från kriget i Bosnien har familjen Mesan gjort. För sex månader sedan stack de från krigsdrabbade Travnik norr om Sarajevo till Zagreb och nu har de nått bordtennis-VM: Pappa Fadil och döttrarna Linda (t v) och Adela.

BILD: ALLAN KARLSSON

Herrlaget består av två muslimer, en kroat och en serb.

Damlaget flydde till Kroatien för ett halvår sedan för att kunna få vara med i pingis-VM.

Bosnien-Hercegovinas lag bjuder på märkliga livsöden.

— Det viktigaste är att vi deltager och visar upp vår identitet och vår flagga, säger damtränaren Fadil Mesan.

Av LARS HILDINGSSON

—även om det bara gäller bordtennis-VM

Cirka 650 pingisspelare är under två veckor samlade i Göteborg.

De flesta är stenhårt koncentrerade på tävlingarna.

Vi kan nog bara ana vilka tankar som rör sig i huvudet på Bosniens spelare under turneringen.

Ofattbart lidande

— Jag har inte kunnat prata med min mamma på två år. Hon finns kvar i ett krisområde några mil norr om Sarajevo, säger Muhamed Mehmedovic.

Muhamed är 22 år och bor numera i sydöstra Belgien.

— Det är enorma lidanden hemma i Bosnien nu. Jag förstår inte kriget.

Serber, kroater och muslimer slåss mot varandra i ett av de mest infernaliska krig världen upplevt.

Tre kulturer, tre religioner som inte kan leva tillsammans.

Muhamed och Tarik Hodzic är muslimer

Nenad Stevanovic är serb.

Boris Pranjkovic är kroat.

Tillsammans (!) bildar de Bosniens herrlag.

— Det är inget onormalt i det, vi har känt varann i 10–15 år, säger serben Nenan.

Stolta över sitt land

— Vi är bosnier och kriget är riktat mot vårt land. Vi är stolta att vi kan få representera vårt land.

Kvartetten hade redan flyttat utomlands när kriget bröt ut på allvar sommaren 1991.

— Men våra förberedelser har varit svåra ändå, säger tränaren Zifko Djuro som bott i Luxemburg i 20 år.

Ännu värre är det för damlaget som till tre fjärdedelar består av familjen Mesan.

Pappa Fadil är tränare och döttrarna Adela och Linda spelar.

— Vi flydde från Travnik för sex månader sedan och lyckades ta oss till Zagreb, berättar Fadil.

Går inte att nå

Tack vare välvilliga bosnier i Göteborg har de lyckats ta sig till VM.

De bor hemma hos nyfunna vänner som fixar transporter och mat åt dem.

— Vi vill tacka alla de som ger av sitt hjärta och sin värme, säger de via en tolk.

Någon kontakt med övriga familjen som är kvar i Bosnien har de inte haft på länge.

— De telefonlinjer som finns in till Bosnien används av ambassader och TV-bolag.

Via ping-pong-diplomati vill de berätta om situationen i Bosnien och sprida fredens budskap.

— Vi är stolta att vi kan representera republiken Bosnien-Hercegovina, säger Fadil och visar upp den nya landssymbolen.

Båda förlorade

När VM inleddes på tisdagen förlorade Bosniens damer mot Lituaen med 1–3 och herrarna mot Lettland med samma siffror.

Men de vann en seger som inte kan mätas i siffror.

VM-KORTISAR

Sveriges herrar vann enkelt 2×3–0.

Förbundskapten **Anders Thunström** var kanske mest nyfiken på en annan match där Sveriges blivande (?) finalmotståndare kanske fanns:

Kina mot Sydkorea där Kina vann med 3–1.

— Inget skrämde mig. Sydkoreas bäste spelare **Kim Taek Soo** verkar ha trassel med sitt ena kna, det såg väldigt konstigt ut och han spelade ju inte mot Kina heller, konstaterade "Thunis".

Kinas världsåtta **Wang Tao** förlorade mot **Hee Chan Kang** (rankad 54:a), medan Kinas bäste **Ma Wenge** krossade världsnian **Yoo Nam Kyu**.

* * *

Jean-Philippe Gatien (rankad tvåa i världen) vann båda sina matcher mot Nordkorea, men Frankrike förlorade ändå med 3–2.

Tyske europamästaren **Jörg Rosskopf** förlorade sina matcher mot Nordkorea som vann med 3–1.

Pass upp för Nordkorea och dess suveräne defensivspecialist **Li Gun Sang**.

* * *

Av de forna staterna Jugoslavien, Sovjetunionen och Tjeckoslovakien har det bildats ett 20-tal nya pingisförbund.

Under beteckningen Independent Federation Players (Oberoende landers spelare) finns de serber som inte får spela i lagtävlingen, bl a **Ilija Lupulesku** och hans fru **Jasna Fazlic**.

Lettland gör sitt första bordtennis-VM sedan 1938 och Litauen sedan 1939, medan Estland t o m hoppas få vara med i nordiska mästerskapen 1994.

Sydafrika — med både svarta och vita spelare i laget — hälsas tillbaka i pingisfamiljen efter 36 års bortavaro.

Turkmenistan gjorde inte någon lyckad VM-premiär. De ringde till VM-arrangörerna i går förmiddag från Arlanda (!) och ville bli hämtade. Då skulle de redan ha spelat två matcher...

The respected Swedish newspaper "I DAG" devoted an entire page to our national team, with a fitting photograph and text. Linda Mešan and her father Fadil Mešan at the world championship in Gothenburg, 1993.

TRANSLATION OF THE TEXT FROM THE SWEDISH NEWSPAPER "I DAG"

PROUD OF THEIR COUNTRY

The men's team is made up of two Muslims, one Croat and one Serb. The women's team fled to Croatia six months ago, so that they could take part in the world championship in ping-pong. The team of Bosnia and Herzegovina offers us strange life stories. "The most important thing is that we take part and show our identity, our flag", says the women's team coach Fadil Mešan. There are 650 participants here in all, and they will spend two weeks in Gothenburg. All of them are firmly focused on the competition. We can only guess what is going on in the minds of the Bosnia and Herzegovina participants during this competition. "I haven't been able to talk to my mother for two years now. She is in a crisis area, ten kilometers north of Sarajevo", says Muhamed Mehmedović. Muhamed is 22 and currently lives in southeastern Belgium. These are unheard-of tragedies unfolding in Bosnia. Serbs, Croats and Muslims are fighting one another in the worst war the world has known. Three religions, three cultures, that cannot live together. Muhamed and Tarik Hodžić are Muslims, Nenad Stevanović a Serb, and Boris Pranjković a Croat. Together they make up the Bosnia and Herzegovina team. "Nothing strange about it, we've known each other for ten or fifteen years already. We are Bosnians and the war is directed against our country. We are proud that we can represent our country", says Nenad. All four moved abroad before the war began. "Our preparations were difficult", says Đuro Žifko, the coach who has lived and worked in Luxembourg for twenty years now.

The women's team had it much worse, made up as it is of three-quarters of the Mešan family. "Six months ago we managed to get out of Travnik and reach Zagreb", says Fadil. Thanks to citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina living in Gothenburg, they managed to reach the world championship. They are staying with newly made friends, who are providing them with food and transport. "We want to thank everyone who received us as guests so warmly and with such heart", they tell us with the help of an interpreter. They have long been unable to make contact with family members who remained in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The existing telephone lines are used by embassies and TV networks. Through ping-pong diplomacy, they wish to show the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and their wish for peace.

"We are proud that we can represent Bosnia and Herzegovina", says Fadil, pointing to the symbol of Bosnia and Herzegovina on his chest. The World Championship began on Tuesday. The women's team lost its first match 1:3 to Lithuania, and the men's team lost by the same score to Latvia. But both came away with a victory that cannot be measured in numbers.

Translated from Swedish by Emir S.

Nor do we need to be ashamed of the results we achieved at the championship that was held. In the team competition, out of 82 countries, the women's team placed 50th, leaving 32 national teams behind it. Here is the individual win-loss record:

Linda Mešan: 7:5
Adela Mešan: 4:6
Vanja Šantić: 0:3

From the reception for the men's team in the port of Gothenburg. From left, holding the flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina: Boris Pranjković, Tarik Hodžić, Adela Mešan, Linda Mešan, Nenad Stevanović, Muhamed Mehmedović and Vanja Šantić. - Gothenburg, 1993.

A pleasant surprise, before the opening of the 42nd World Table Tennis Championship, was arranged for many national teams, including ours, by the renowned table tennis equipment company "Butterfly", the event's sponsor. The cocktail reception held to mark 20 years of this company's presence at world championships was attended by many dignitaries of the table tennis world. In the photograph, Adela Mešan in the company of Chinese dignitaries. Fourth from left, three-time world champion Mr. Zhuang Zedong. Gothenburg, 1993.

The Bosnia and Herzegovina table tennis national teams in front of the restaurant "Dubrovnik". Top row from left: Đuro Žifko (men's coach), Linda Mešan, Vanja Šantić, Mr. Listo the restaurant owner, Adela Mešan, Tarik Hodžić and Fadil Mešan (women's coach). Bottom row from left: Nenad Stevanović, Muhamed Mehmedović and Boris Pranjković. Gothenburg, 1993.

It is a great honor to represent one's country at sporting competitions, an occasion on which one gets to know many people and their customs. A special pleasure is meeting the foremost figure of the sport one practices. We too had that honor, we who represented Bosnia and Herzegovina in table tennis. Mr Ichiro Ogimura, president of the ITTF, spent some time in the company of members of our national team, on which occasion he took an interest in the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the photograph, from left: Adela Mešan, Linda Mešan, Mr Ichiro Ogimura, Vanja Šantić, Fadil Mešan and Đuro Žifko.

Göteborg, 1993.

APPEARANCES ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE FOLLOWING THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP IN GÖTEBORG

I think you have understood the significance of our national teams' appearances on the international scene and their contribution to spreading the truth about the struggle for the freedom and independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It would take up a great deal of space to write about every appearance separately, so on this occasion I will single out only the most significant ones. The exceptions are: the first appearance in Topolčani (cadets and juniors), the second in Bratislava (the first appearance of the senior national teams), and the first appearance of senior teams at a world championship (Göteborg). Alongside the names, there will also be photographs from the competitions mentioned.

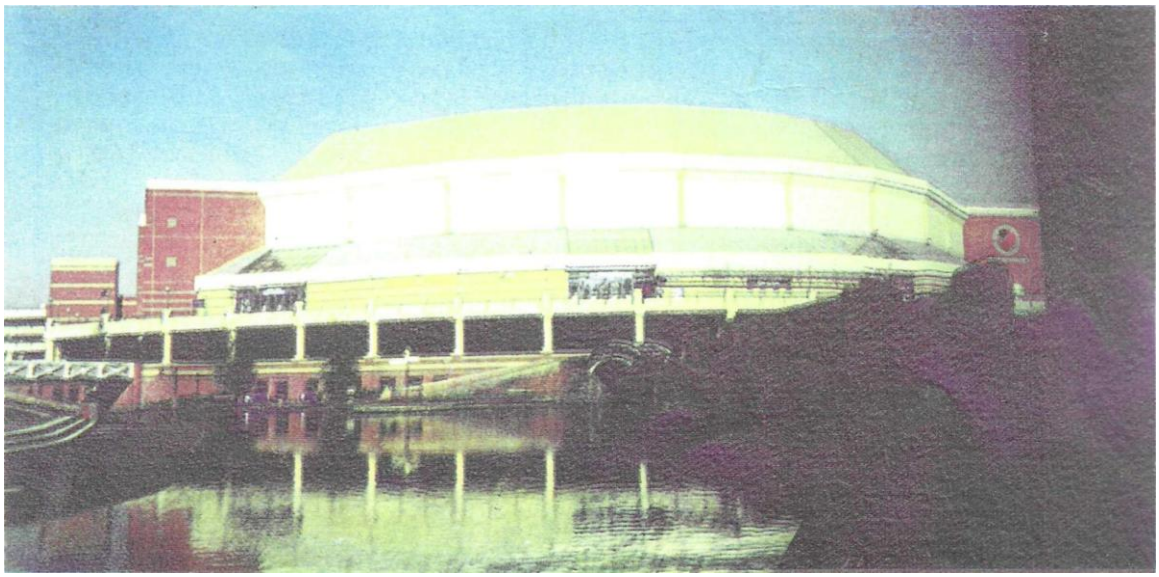
EUROPEAN TABLE TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIP FOR SENIOR MEN AND WOMEN, BIRMINGHAM, FROM 24 MARCH TO 4 APRIL 1994

At this European Championship, our town again provided two members of the national team. It could have happened that the entire national team at this competition consisted of members of TTC "Borac" from Travnik, had Vanja Šantić not withdrawn from the national team appearance. For that reason, the women's national team consisted of: Adela Mešan, Linda Mešan, Elvira Mehić and coach Fadil Mešan. The men's squad consisted of: Muhamed Mehmedović, Tarik Hodžić, Samir Mulabdić, Nenad Stevanović and coach Đuro Žifko.

The men's squad finished 32nd among 44 countries, while the girls finished 30th among 38 countries.

The organizer also prepared an unpleasant surprise for us. During the opening ceremony of the championship, ours was not among the flags of the participants. We immediately left the hall, demanding an explanation for such an omission from Mr Clive Oakman. It ran as follows: "The girl who was supposed to carry the flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the ceremony had fallen ill." Naturally, we were not satisfied with this answer, so we demanded that a public apology be made over the loudspeaker system in front of those present for the omission that had occurred, with a note that this carried no political connotation whatsoever. Otherwise, we would leave the competition, and the journalists would receive material that the organizer would not like. Mr Oakman immediately complied with our request. It was yet another victory of ours in representing our country.

Our national team members won the sympathies of the participants and made many friends right from their first appearance. One of the friendships formed was with members of the Greek national team. In the photograph, bottom row, members of the Greek national team: Zerdila Diana, Mirou Maria, Danduola Despina, Antiopoulo Katerina and the team's coach. Top row, from left: Linda Mešan, Elvira Mehić, Adela Mešan and coach Fadil Mešan. Birmingham, 1994.



A view of the sports hall in which the European Table Tennis Championship for senior men and women was held. Birmingham, 1994.

TTC "BORAC" TRAVNIK - MEN'S TEAM IN THE "NANCY EVANS" CUP

Although the war raged with full ferocity, the athletes of our country, among them the table tennis players, did not stop their activities for a single moment. True, those activities were not of pre-war intensity, but they were noticeable. This was only logical, given that many sports facilities, including table tennis ones, were damaged or completely destroyed. And those that remained undamaged were used to house people who were left not only without property, but even without a roof over their heads. Thus sports halls came to replace the homes of thousands of the homeless. Despite this, training and competing continued. These competitions were at first local in character, and later at the level of the state. Diligent table tennis workers, led by Mr Sead Žerić (the club's president), found various ways to secure sports equipment and, most basically, a space in which to hold activities. That such efforts bore fruit is confirmed by the fact that both the women's and men's squads earned the right, at the first national championship, to take part in the Nancy Evans Cup. This gave them the opportunity to represent their country and their Travnik on the international scene, which was a great honor.

The Topalbegović and Mešan families, who were living in Belgium (Liège), were ready to offer the women's team ten days of hospitality with preparations arranged. And when everything had been agreed, they were informed that the women's team would not be taking part in the aforementioned competition.

The men's team nonetheless made it onto the international scene. They met the Italian TTC "Lib Alfaterna" from Salerno. As expected, they lost that match, but they were great in telling the truth about the war in our country. Our town was represented in that historic match by: Herceg, Hamzić and Salidžik, while the delegation included the club's president Mr Sead Žerić and coach Smail Hodžić.

43rd WORLD TABLE TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIP FOR SENIOR MEN AND WOMEN, TIANJIN (CHINA), MAY 1995

Seeing China, the most populous country in the world, is a dream for many. But seeing it holds a special appeal for those who play table tennis. The reason is not only that the best table tennis in the world is played in that country, but also its natural beauty and landmarks. Its city of Tianjin was awarded the organization of the 43rd World Table Tennis Championship for senior men and women, in which our two national teams also took part. This time too, Travnik provided two of the three women representatives. In the women's coaching seat sat coach Anto Dafinić, while Mr Đuro Žifko remained in the men's. Once again the competitors had to pay their own, not inconsiderable, travel costs, without anyone's help, which was not easy.

The women's national team appeared in China in the following lineup: Adela Mešan, Linda Mešan and Alma Fazlić, while the men's team consisted of Muhamed Mehmedović, Tarik Hodžić, Mirza Hadžijahić and Nermin Smajić. Unlike the reception in England, in China our representatives were received with exceptional honor. This could be noticed at every step. The media once again devoted considerable attention to the Bosnia and Herzegovina national team. Besides the newspapers and radio reporting daily on our teams' appearances, our representatives were also guests on local television, which broadcast the interview live. On that occasion, the discussion was not only about table tennis, but also about the situation in our country and its just struggle for freedom.

A special pleasure for the members of our national team was a visit to the Home for Children without Parents. They spent a pleasant afternoon with those children, socializing with them and with the people who care for them. What made that gathering especially remarkable was the release of doves of peace and listening to the music of a four-year-old boy, who performed the melody of the "Turkish March" on the cimbalom without a single mistake. Listening to him, they simply could not believe that such a thing was possible. Well, that too is China! The men's national team finished 46th among 84 participants, while the women's team took 47th place out of the same number. Besides China, our national teams also appeared at: the World Championship in Manchester in 1997, in the Netherlands at the individual World Championship in 1999, and in Malaysia at the team World Championship in 2000. For objective reasons, the organization of the 1999 World Championship was taken away from Yugoslavia and split into individual and team events, organized by the Netherlands and Malaysia respectively. The national teams of Bosnia and Herzegovina also appeared at two further European Championships, held in 1996 and 1999 in Slovakia (Bratislava) and the Netherlands (Eindhoven). Sport, and table tennis with it, made a significant contribution to shedding light on the just struggle for the liberation of our country from the aggressor. In that contribution, Travnik table tennis occupies a significant place. From what is written in this book alone, Travnik and its citizens can be proud of their TTC "Borac" and its members.

The members of the Bosnia and Herzegovina national team used their visit to one of the wonders of the world, the famous Great Wall of China, for a photograph. You see the sisters Adela and Linda Mešan with the unfurled Bosnia and Herzegovina flag with its golden-yellow lilies.

TIANJIN - host city of the 43rd World Table Tennis Championship for senior men and women. May 1995.

IN WORD AND IMAGE

EVENTS AND INDIVIDUALS

It was not simple to gather all the facts and chronologically list all the events and individuals who contributed to the development of the table tennis sport over the last several decades in Travnik. Because of possible omissions, I will present a shorter overview of the most important moments in the history of the table tennis sport in Travnik.

First I will note that, during and after the war, seven national championships for senior men and women were held, at which Travnik's table tennis players, both men and women, achieved great success. At the first, held in Zenica from 11 to 14 June 1994, our teams achieved the following placings in the team event: senior women 2nd place, junior women 2nd place, cadet girls 2nd place, senior men 3rd place, junior men 2nd place and cadet boys 2nd place. In the individual event, the best placing was achieved by Lejla Ajanić, with fourth place (senior women), Alma Šehić 3rd place (junior women), Topić 4th place (cadet girls), Fadil Hamzić 1st place (junior men) and Kasumović 4th place (cadet boys). From 30 March to 2 April 1995, the second national team and individual championship was held. At this championship the men did not achieve a notable result, while the women's team brought titles to Travnik in both the individual event (Alma Fazlić) and the team event (TTC 'Borac' Travnik). At the following five competitions our club had no success. However, the Mešan sisters, Adela and Linda, regardless of the fact that they were living abroad, were and remained women of Travnik, so every success of theirs was also a success for their Travnik. They did not take part in the first two national championships, but at the following five, the two of them played in the final all five times. Adela won four Bosnia and Herzegovina championship titles: in 1996, 1997, 1998 and 2000, while Linda won the championship title in 1999. In 1995, our club also provided two national team members who appeared for the junior national team at the European Championship held in The Hague (Netherlands). On that occasion, Sanel Sojtarić and Adnan Žerić put on the most cherished jersey. In that period, Batić Martina and Mirza Hodžić also stood out.

TABLE TENNIS PLAYERS, MEN AND WOMEN, WHO WORE THE JERSEY OF TTC 'BORAC' BUT DID NOT COME UP THROUGH ITS TABLE TENNIS SCHOOL

TTC 'Borac' from Travnik, as I have already noted earlier, had its own table tennis school from which it drew its playing staff, and with that staff it achieved enviable results. However, there were also cases, especially during the war, when individuals who had not come up through its school put on our club's jersey. In the women's team, before the war, the following table tennis players appeared: Nevenka Šako, Samela Bašić and Aida Pezer, all three for a relatively short time. During the war, also very briefly, Alma Fazlić and Lejla Ajanić wore the jersey.

Among the men, this was more pronounced. Before the war, the jersey of TTC 'Borac' was worn by: Vjekoslav Blaškan, Miroslav Bekavac, Ivica Slavko and Stipo Brkan (all from Vitez), while during the war F. Hamzić and Salidžik put on the jersey.

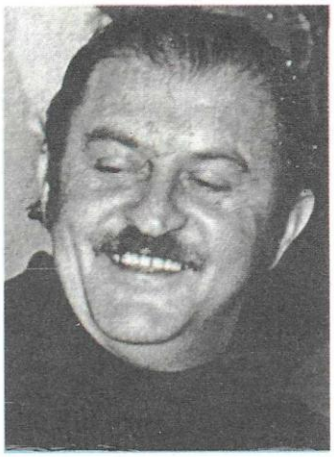
Regardless of the time that all those mentioned spent at TTC 'Borac', it is certain that they too contributed to the results achieved by our club. I take this opportunity to thank them for that contribution on behalf of the members of our club.

A DISABLED TABLE TENNIS PLAYER

Tomislav Malenica is the name of the young man who, although in a wheelchair, is an exceptional connoisseur of the game of table tennis. A devotee of this beautiful and, above all, beneficial game, of a kind rarely encountered. Tomislav was born in Travnik, and for a number of years has been a resident of Bielefeld (Germany), where he is employed and plays for the local disabled table tennis club, in which he is one of the better players. He is a participant in numerous table tennis tournaments, from which he often returns as the winner. During his annual holiday, Tomislav always makes sure to visit his native town, and takes the opportunity to do a few training sessions on the premises of TTC 'Borac'. In the photograph, Tomislav Malenica in the company of the Mešan sisters and their mother Elvica.

March 1991.

PRESIDENTS OF TTC 'BORAC' FROM TRAVNIK, DURING WHOSE TIME THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PAGES OF TABLE TENNIS WERE WRITTEN



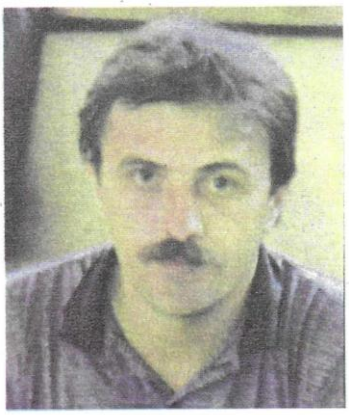
MIROSLAV BANUŠIĆ

ŽELIMIR HALAJKIJEVIĆ

RADOVAN RADOVIĆ

Mr Miroslav Banušić, Mr Želimir Halajkijević and Mr Radovan Radović are the presidents of TTC 'Borac' during whose time this club advanced in great strides. Under their leadership, TTC 'Borac' won everything there was to be won in the table tennis sport of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Unfortunately, none of them is alive today. They passed away in the same order in which they had come to head TTC 'Borac'. They will remain in lasting memory, not only of table tennis enthusiasts, but also in the lasting memory of the citizens of our town.

IZET TAMBURIĆ



EŠREF BEGOVAC

Mr Izet Tamburić remained at the head of TTC 'Borac' for a full four years. The results achieved during that time will remain inscribed in golden letters in the history of Travnik sport. His successor, Mr Ešref Begovac, successfully continued where he had left off. Thanks to Mr Begovac, TTC 'Borac' established friendly relations with the Polish table tennis club 'Granit'. Unfortunately, Mr Ešref Begovac is also no longer among the living. Like the first three, he will live forever in the hearts of the citizens of Travnik.

AIDA PEZER

SAMELA BAŠIĆ

Aida Pezer and Samela Bašić are among those table tennis players who did not come up through our school, but who contributed to the good results of TTC 'Borac' while they wore its jersey.

Mr Slobodan Šušljik (in the photograph, applauding in the middle), undoubtedly belongs among those who, through selfless and voluntary work, contributed to the promotion of table tennis in Travnik.

The town of Travnik expected a great deal from the second generation of table tennis players, which included many talented boys. However, the same thing happened to it as to the first. Alongside talent, it needed a coach, not only one with professional knowledge, but also one who would have enough time and patience to work with it. In truth, it never had one. In the photograph are those from whom much was expected. From left: Fadil Mešan (coach of the women's team), Zoran Šunjić, Vjekoslav Visković, Ivan Visković and Džemaludin Herceg.

A group photograph of the best of the second generation. From left: Dijana Bilić, Jadranka Vulić, Ivan Visković, Adela Mešan, Zoran Šunjić, Amela Merdanović, Miodrag Banjac, Linda Mešan, Vjekoslav Visković, Oljenka Kiso and Džemaludin Herceg.

The sisters Adela and Linda Mešan, together with their father Fadil, never severed ties with the club where they got their start. During the war, they helped it as much as they were able. In the photograph, Fadil Mešan presents six sets of 'YASAKA' table tennis equipment to the president of TTC 'Borac', Mr. Sead Žerić. On the right, the sisters Adela and Linda Mešan.

In the photograph, members of the table tennis club 'Borac' in new 'YASAKA' table tennis equipment, a gift from the Mešan sisters and their father Fadil.

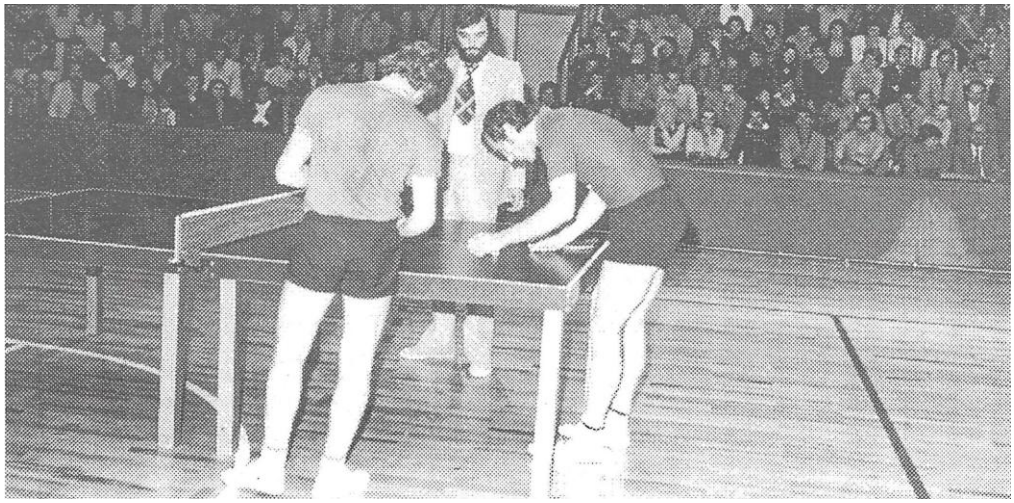
The successes of TTC 'Borac' of Travnik are tied to a long and successful cooperation with TTC 'Vitez' of Vitez, dating back to the founding of TTC 'Borac' in July 1972. A special contribution to this cooperation was made by members of TTC 'Vitez': Ivan Šantić, Slavko Ivica, Stipo Brkan, Enver Jašarević, Senad Rizvanović, Harun Rizvanović, and Avdo Zlotrg, as well as table tennis players from Vitez who wore the Borac jersey: Miroslav Bekavac and Vjekoslav Blaškan

In the photograph you see members of TTC 'Vitez' and TTC 'Borac' after a successful appearance at the junior table tennis championship of Bosnia and Herzegovina, held in Doboj in April 1978. The championship titles went to Sonja Solomun of Borac and Harun Rizvanović of Vitez. The photograph shows members of the two friendly clubs. From left, top row: Sead Šehić (Vitez), Fadil Mešan (Travnik), Harun Rizvanović (Vitez), and Senad Palić (Vitez). Bottom row, from left: Saliha Sojtarić, Milanka Kaurin, Mirna Halajkijević, Sulejman Gegić (all from Travnik), Salahudin Beganović (Vitez), Alma Sijamija (Travnik), Zoljić (Tuzla), and Sonja Solomun (Travnik).

Doboj, April 1978.

Travnik and its TTC 'Borac' are among the few entrusted with even the most significant table tennis competitions. Thus, alongside the championships of Bosnia and Herzegovina and former Yugoslavia, Travnik hosted: the European League match between Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, the gathering of the four best table tennis players of former Yugoslavia, the gathering of the 24 best female table tennis players of former Yugoslavia, the gathering of the ten best table tennis players of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and a number of other significant competitions.

A moment from the gathering of the twenty-four best female table tennis players of former Yugoslavia. In the foreground, Reflak (Slovenia) and Bernardić (Vojvodina).



A moment from the gathering of the four best table tennis players of former Yugoslavia. Table tennis legends Anton Stipančić and Dragutin Šurbek choose balls before the start of the match. Before a packed audience, the match was officiated by Mr. Jadranko Ohnec.

U TRAVNIKU ODRŽAN MEČ U OKVIRU II KOLA EVROPSKE STONOTENISKE SUPER LIGE

Za sve ljubitelje stonog tenisa 16. oktobar će dugo ostati u lijepom sjećanju. Travničani su tog dana imali priliku da u sportskoj dvorani Osnovne škole »Braća Lolić« posmatraju susret reprezentacija Jugoslavije i Čehoslovačke, koji se igrao u okviru drugog kola evropske stonoteniske super lige. Pred oko 400 gledalaca reprezentativci obje zemlje, prikazali su vrhunski stoni tenis.

U ovom susretu Čehoslovački stonoteniseri su pokazali više sigurnosti ali i znanje, i zasluženo porazili našu reprezentaciju visokim rezultatom 6:1. Iako niko nije očekivao ovako visok poraz, još jednom treba reći, da je pobjeda Čehoslovaka potpuno zaslužena.

Najbolji pojedinac susreta bio je Jindrich Pansky, koji je izvojevao četiri pobjede za svoju ekipu. Dvije u pojedinačnim susretima i po jednu u igri muških parova i mješovitom dublu. Njemu uz rame je i Marie Hrachova sa dvije pobjede, po jednom u pojedinačnom susretu i mješovitom dublu. Pansky i Hrachova su i u ovim mečevima pokazali da se sasvim zasluženo nalaze na samom vrhu evropskog i svjetskog stonog tenisa.

Naši nisu imali »svoj« dan ali ni dovoljno znanja da se uspješnije suprotstave Čehoslovacima. Jedinu pobjedu ostvario je Zoran Kalinić u susretu sa drugim igračem Čehoslovačkog tima Vladislavom Brodom.

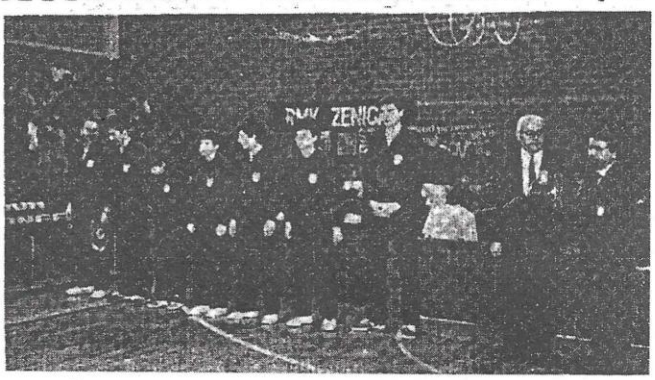
Ilie Lupulesku i Zoran Primorac su se svojski zalagali, ali poraza. Ipak, treba napomenuti da su to mladići, na koje savezni kapiten Dušan Osmanagić može u narednom periodu ozbiljno računati, a njihova mladost i pokazani kvalitet daju veliku nadu da bi mogli zamijeniti naše starije asove. O njima će se sigurno još više čuti i znati i u svjetskoj konkurenciji.

Branka Batinić i Gordana Perkučin nisu uspjele da u pojedinačnom susretu i igri mješovitih parova pariraju raspoloženoj i kvalitetnoj igračici kakva je Marie Hrachova.

Treba nešto reći i o organizaciji ovog susreta, koji je odigran u okviru proslave Dana oslobođenja Travnika. Vrijedni sportski radnici grada, a naročito stonoteniskog kluba »Borac« uložili su ogromne napore da ovaj meč bude odigran u što boljim uslovima. U tome su u potpunosti uspjeli, što potvrđuju i riječi pohvale koje su uputile obe reprezentacije. Kao i u svim sličnim prilikama, veliku podršku organizatori su imali u privrednim organizacijama iz Travnika, SOUR-a »Borac«, RO »Sipad-Sebešić«, PBS Osnovna banka Travnik i drugim, koje su svojom materijalnom podrškom omogućile da se jedan ovako izuzetan sportski događaj održi u našem gradu.

Na kraju treba spomenuti i travničku publiku koja je znala nagraditi svaki uspješan potez svih igrača i igračica. Nakon završetka meča, aplauzom je ispratila obe ekipe i na taj način se zahvalila svim akterima meča, za

JUGOSLAVIJA - ČEHOSLOVAČKA 1:6



In the match against Czechoslovakia, the team of former Yugoslavia played in the following lineup: Dušan Osmanagić (team selector), Zlatko Novaković (coach), and players Branka Batinić, Gordana Perkučin, Ilije Lupulesku, Zoran Primorac, and Zoran Kalinić. Travnik, 16 October 1985.

Nakon dvodnevnih borbi u Travniku je 3. februara završen savezni pozivni turnir I i II grupe najboljih stonotenisenki naše zemlje.

U oba takmičarska dana, veliki broj ljubitelja ovog atraktivnog sporta posmatrao je uzbudljive i do kraja neizvjesne borbe takmičarki.

Poslije jedanaest odigranih kola konačne tabele I i II grupe izgledaju ovako:

I GRUPA

1. Vesna Ojsteršek	9 : 2	18
2. Amela Fazlić	8 : 3	16
3. Jasna Bernardić	7 : 4	14
4. Dubravka-Fabri -Vučković	6 : 5	12
5. Marica Grkinić	5 : 6	10
6. Jasna Fazlić	5 : 6	10
7. Monika Reklak	5 : 6	10
8. Mirjam Čadež	5 : 6	10
9. Andrea Ojsteršek	4 : 7	8
10. Tatjana Krsnik	3 : 8	6
11. Olga Gopić	3 : 8	6
12. Valerija Vašidi	2 : 9	4

II GRUPA

1. Fatima Isanović	9 : 2	18
2. Nada Kujundžić	8 : 3	16
3. Mirela Šikoronja	7 : 4	14
4. Ljiljana Subotin	6 : 5	12
5. Ivana Čok	6 : 5	12
6. Borislava Miloradov	6 : 5	12
7. Duška Jovičić	6 : 5	12
8. Otilija Dognar	5 : 6	10
9. Tanja Pandev	5 : 6	10
10. Polona Frelih	4 : 7	8
11. Zorana Zrnić	3 : 8	6
12. Marina Sretenović	1 : 10	2

Nakon završetka takmičenja održan je i svečani ceremonijal dodjele priznanja i nagrada trima prvoplasiranim takmičarkama iz obe grupe.

Ovo takmičenje je inače odigrano, kako smo već rekli, pred prepunim gledalištem, a organizacija takmičenja je bila besprijekorna. To svjedoče i izjave:

Borko Anđelić, delegat STSJ:

»Za više od 30 godina društvenog rada u stonoteniskom sportu za koje vrijeme sam posjetio i veliki broj republičkih, saveznih i međunarodnih takmičenja, skoro da nisam naišao na ovakvu toplinu i srdačnost u prihvatanju učesnika i izvanrednu angažovanost u pripremi i realizovanju čitavog takmičenja. Otvoren je put za organizaciju i daleko većih međunarodnih stonoteniskih priredbi, ali i put za dalji razvoj stonoteniskog sporta u ovoj lijepoj živopisnoj komuni«.

V. Ojsteršek, trener STK »Kemičar« Hrastnik:

»Iznenađen sam vašim gostoprimstvom. Želim da se to pročuje, jer tako kao što ste vi nas primili, nisam još doživio.

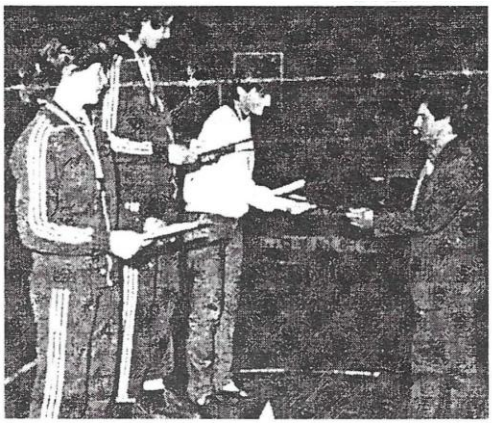
Puno vam hvala i dosta uspjeha u vašem daljem radu«.

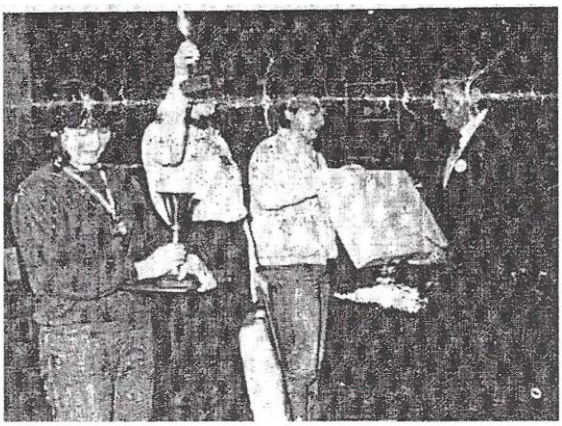
Zlatko Novaković, trener STK »Mladost-Ribomaterijal« Zagreb.

»Nakon dva dana druženja i sportskih borbi, odlazimo iz Travnika, prepuni utisaka o divnom prijemu, gostoljubivosti i prijatnosti domaćina, uz organizaciju kakvu ne pamtimo godinama na sličnim turnirima«.

Bolje pohvale ne trebaju, a ovakva razmišljanja sportskih radnika, najbolja su garancija za organizovanje budućih sportskih takmičenja u našem gradu.

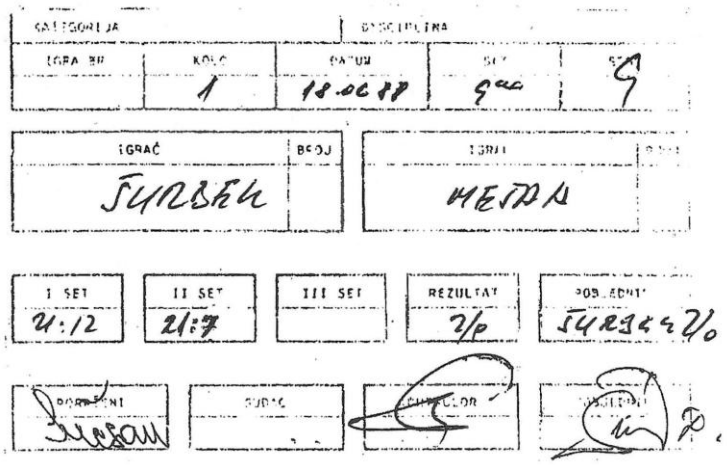
G. Blaževlć





AN INVITATIONAL TOURNAMENT WAS HELD IN TRAVNIK, IN WHICH THE TWENTY-FOUR BEST FEMALE TABLE TENNIS PLAYERS OF FORMER YUGOSLAVIA TOOK PART.

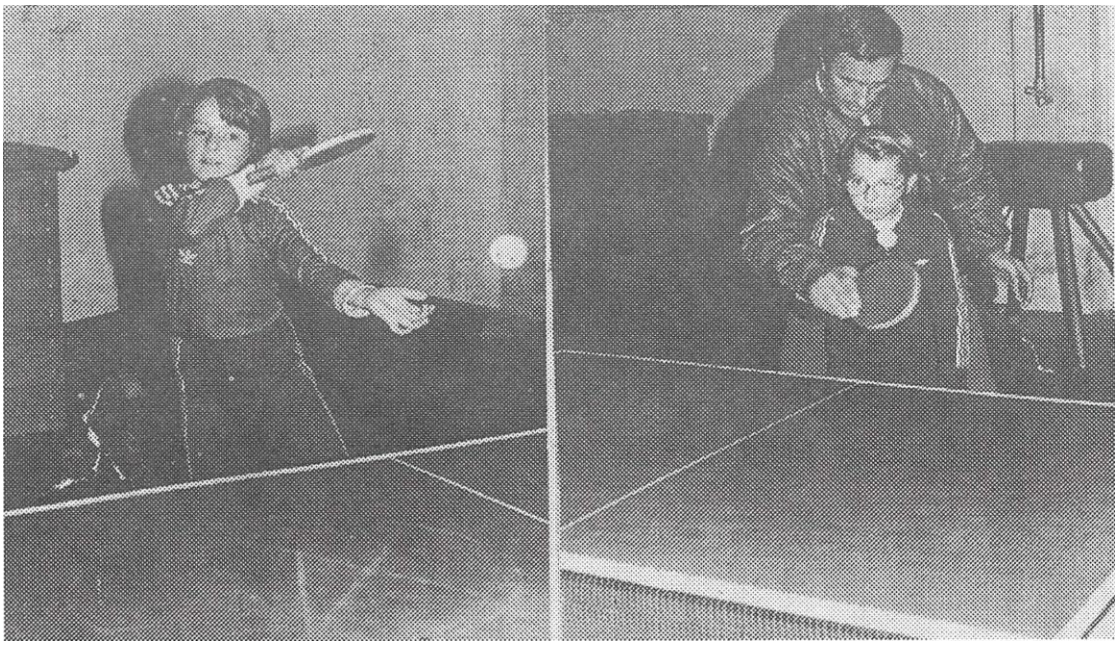
TRAVNIK, 3 FEBRUARY 1985.



Whatever the result may be, it is a great honor to find oneself facing a giant of table tennis. The honor of meeting one of them fell to me in the coastal town of Crikvenica in June 1988, when I found myself facing Dragutin Šurbek, a legend of world table tennis. Above, the scoresheet from that match, which I believe deserved a place in the pages of this book.

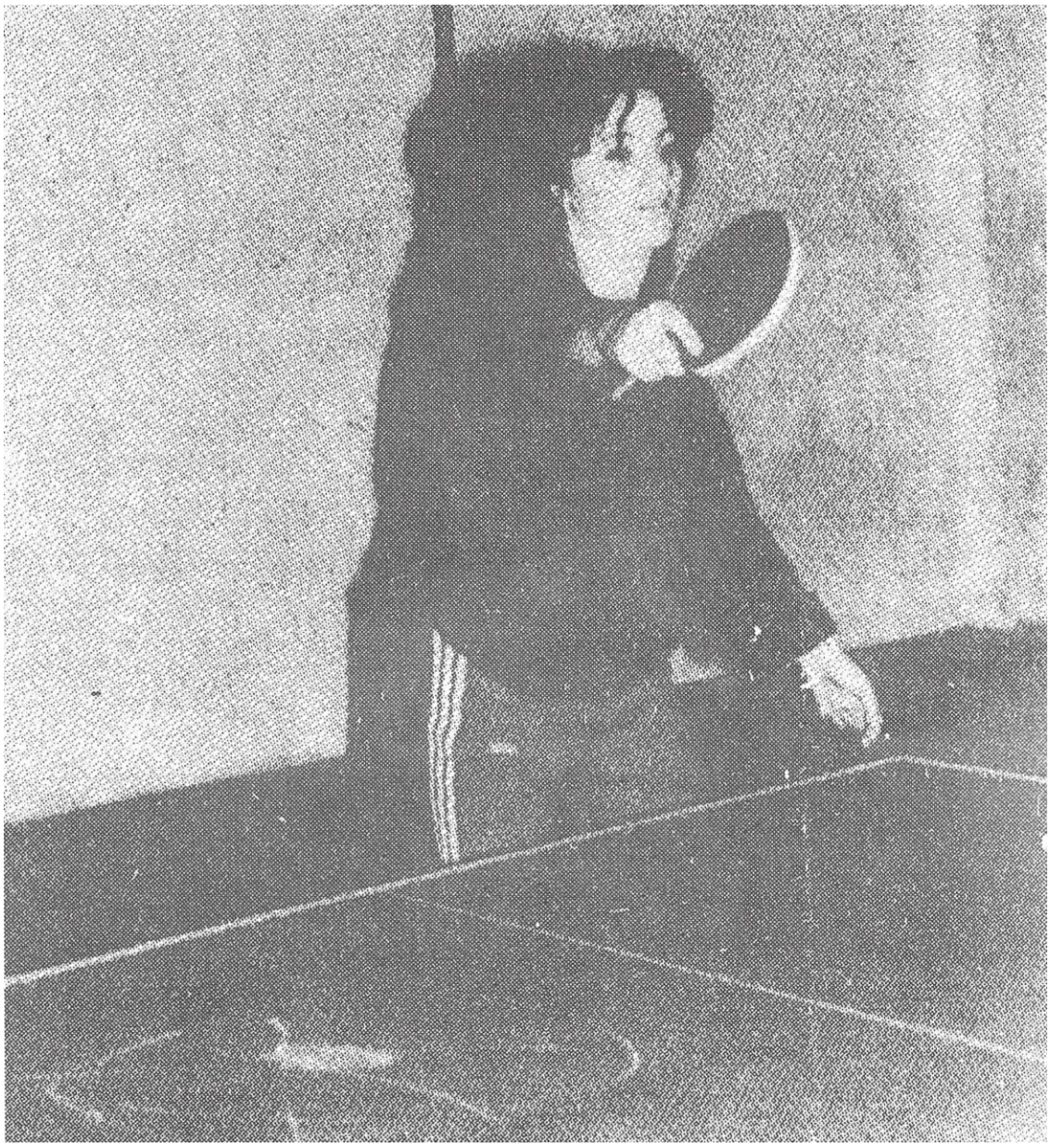
Wherever he appeared, Dragutin Šurbek was a target for autograph hunters. In the photograph we see him in the company of the youngest table tennis enthusiasts of our town. Many, now grown adults, will recognize themselves in the photographs of this book when they come to read it. In this one, they will be: Milanka, Mensura, Boris, Edina, Smajo, Sulejman... It was a time when TTC 'Borac' was striding forward in great leaps.

For our guests from friendly Poland, the stay on Čiovo was the most enjoyable part. They truly relished it then, taking in all the beauty of the sea and the warmth of the sun. In the photograph, Mr. Janusz Szablinski (president of TTC 'Granit') playing with the youngest members of Granit and Borac. Čiovo, July 1986.



The sisters Adela and Linda Mešan began playing table tennis very early, under the expert supervision of their father Fadil. In the photograph, seven-year-old Adela (left) practices the forehand stroke, while their father Fadil shows six-year-old Linda (right) how to chop.

Travnik, 1980.



It is a rarity for an athlete to spend fifteen years in the same jersey. One of those rare few is Milanka Kaurin, who did not change her table tennis jersey bearing the crest of the town of Travnik for a full fifteen years. During that time she achieved a series of notable results, the most valuable of which was the team achievement of reaching the ranks of the best table tennis teams in former Yugoslavia. In that historic achievement, Milanka's contribution was immeasurable. In the annals of table tennis, not only of our town but of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the name of this exceptional sportswoman is inscribed alongside those of the very best.

.

Two more girls who wrote the brightest pages of table tennis in the town of Travnik. In the photograph, Saliha Sojtarić (left), alongside Milanka, who had the longest tenure in the Borac jersey, together with Mirna Halajkijević (right).

Doboj, 1978.

Clubs whose members, together with their coach, make up an entire national team are rare, if they exist at all. One such club is TTC "Borac" of Travnik. In the photograph, the women's table tennis team of Bosnia and Herzegovina. From left: Vanja Šantić, Linda Mešan, coach Fadil Mešan, and Adela Mešan. (all members of TTC "Borac" Travnik)

Gothenburg, 1993.

In the photograph, Adela and Linda Mešan on the winners' podium after the conclusion of the national championship. This scene repeated itself from their very first appearance, in which the two of them played the final. Adela is a four-time champion of Bosnia and Herzegovina – in 1996, 1997, 1998, and 2000 – while Linda won the championship title of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1999.

Today, the sisters Adela and Linda Mešan, with their father Fadil, play for TTC "Royal Alpa XL" of Brussels (Belgium). With that club they won the Cup of Belgium in 1997 and 2000, and the national championship title in 1999. In the photograph, from right: Caroline Neetens, Maud Billen, Adela Mešan, Linda Mešan, and team coach Fadil Mešan.

Brussels, 1997.

FOR THOSE WHO HAVE CHOSEN TABLE TENNIS AS THEIR SPORT.

TABLE TENNIS

- Table tennis is a song sung by the body with its own power, yet it is never sung the same way twice.
- Table tennis has greatness in it precisely because it has its own tragedy.
- The greatest and hardest struggle is the one with oneself.
- Table tennis can be a mass pursuit as a game, but not as an art.
- Everyone has come to love table tennis for its beauty.
- Only when a player begins to study it does table tennis gain its true value.
- Table tennis has its own: elementary school, gymnasium, and university.
- The finest mark a table tennis club can earn is that within it there is a genuine table tennis life. In table tennis there is quality, and there is top-level quality, and the two differ profoundly. That difference is rarely visible.
- A table tennis player goes through many psychological changes before reaching maturity.
- At a competition one must know how to: conduct oneself, remember, observe.
- Knowing how to notice things - that is a skill.

TRAINING

- Training that feels comfortable to you is too little for top results.
- All good fortune is the result of work and courage.
- A person is a slave for as long as they do only what is demanded of them. The moment they do more than that, they become a free person.
- For all people, an hour has 60 minutes. Every person's success depends on how they use those minutes.
- The true charm of table tennis lies in training. There one: works, learns, develops friendship.
- Competition is an exam of one's work, just as in school.
- Use rest to reflect on past and future work.
- A fixed pattern in table tennis hampers your work. You grow rigid and lose your originality. Change things, defy the pattern.
- A GOOD TABLE TENNIS PLAYER SHOULD NOT BE PUSHED TO WORK, BUT TO REST.
- It is easy to be clever in talking, in criticizing... but go and create, work.
- One should always be competing, even with oneself if need be. This develops self-initiative for independent training.
- "I will start now." A table tennis player often makes that decision. But when will I persevere? That is the question one should ask more often! Monotony is the gravest sin of training.
- Does a board member who never comes to training have any ambition for the club?
- Before you begin playing a match, ask yourself the question: "What do I want?" Victory, a fight, an honorable defeat after a great fight, to learn through struggle, and so on.
- With what do I want it? With good serves, spins, counter-hitting, changes in the intensity of attack, chopping...
- One should always believe in oneself, especially if one has trained honestly.
- In every match one must be maximally persistent, giving everything one has until the very end.
- The more effort and sweat in training, the less hardship and more joy in competition.
- Eating properly means just as much as training properly.

- The fight against nicotine, alcohol, and drugs is an integral part of a table tennis player's work.
- A person who works is never entirely unhappy. Work alone does not tire you out.
- Work and love are the most beautiful things in the world!
- A person who makes no mistakes in their work is usually not working hard enough.

COACH

- I dream of a coach who is listened to and loved.
- There are no great table tennis collectives without great table tennis leadership.
- A young table tennis player needs a teacher, since they are a beginner in the sport. An older player, on the other hand, needs an advisor and a critic. The young are inexperienced, the older make mistakes.
- Behind almost every famous athlete stands a famous coach.
- A true student is one who, in disagreements, admits that the coach is right.
- It is better to listen to a coach than merely to acknowledge that he writes well.
- Just as there are born singers, so too there are born table tennis players. They must be trained to want victory in play. Upbringing is the key to every culture. A table tennis player must be trained, no matter how much talent they have.
- That is how life is! To create something, you first have to convince the non-experts, while experts are convinced by results.

SUCCESS

- Indecision is a waste of time. Many people are unhappy precisely because of it.
- Supreme psychological effort leads to the greatest success.
- A table tennis player must practice independently. That does not mean several players cannot train at the same time in the hall. It is like several people playing music in one room, yet each listening to the sound of their own instrument.
- The least a table tennis player can gain from a competition is experience.
- Watch and see what your opponent does with the racket, how they move, how they receive serves, whether they squander points...
- If you truly want something, then almost nothing is impossible.
- The very struggle for the top makes a table tennis player happy.
- If you want to create something great, put your whole self into it.
- BELIEF IN ONE'S OWN STRENGTH IS THE TRUE SECRET OF SUCCESS.
- EVERY GREAT SUCCESS IS FOLLOWED BY ENVY. BUT IT IS BETTER TO BE ENVIED THAN PITIED.
- A point lost carelessly counts double for your opponent, because it gives them strength.
- Whoever thinks of defeat in advance is already half-beaten even before the match begins.

(The above sayings were collected and compiled by the great connoisseur of table tennis, Mr. Ištvan Sabo-Pišta.)

THE BALL WITH MANY FACES

How many times has it already been shown that the level of competition does not matter for sporting enjoyment to be top-notch! In the end, a contest always remains a contest. And the competitors in it always give their utmost.

The open pioneer championship of Zagreb in ping-pong was, for that reason, a first-rate sporting event. In many ways the competition may have been even more exciting, since kids simply do not know the calculations of adults and approach every contest with full passion. Just how much fire surrounded that little celluloid ball is probably best told by the faces of the little fighters, boys and girls alike.

NAMES FROM THE TABLE TENNIS CLUB "BORAC" TRAVNIK, 1972-2000.

PRESIDENTS: Miroslav Banušić, Želimir Halajkijević, Radovan Radović, Izet Tamburić, Ešref Begovac, Besim Halilović, Fahrudin Karakaš, Sead Žerić, Omer Borić...

SECRETARIES: Mustafa Hočkić, Radovan Radović, Dragana Vidaček, Stipo Lozić, Slobodan Šušljik.

MEMBERS OF THE PRESIDENCY: Besim Terzić, Bazdulj, Smail Sojtarić, Mićo Tovirac, Tomislav Gelić, Anton Glogoški, Vladimir Jerić, Tomislav Josipović, Nihad Memišević, Smiljan Božić, Kazimir Jurić, Mirsad Dautović, Branko Ahmet Kulenović, Tomislav Visković, Anto Šunjić, Kasim Herceg, Omer Šehić.

COACHES: Ibrahim Bazdulj, Mustafa Hočkić, Smail Hodžić, Sulejman Gegić, Džemaludin Herceg, Stipo Brkan, Jadranko Ohnec, and Fadil Mešan.

MALE TABLE TENNIS PLAYERS OF TTC "BORAC" WHO PLAYED FOR ONE OF THE NATIONAL SELECTIONS: Iorahim Bazdulj, Esad Kasumović, Mustafa Hoćkić, Fadil Mešan, Mišo Radović, Gegić, Smail Hodžić, Goran Blažević, Goran Ugrica, Džemaludin Herceg, Ivan Vjekoslav Visković, Zoran Žunjić, Emin Gradaščević, Jasmin Gradaščević, Amir Nezirović, Nenad Rezdeušek, Salko Sojtarić, Mirza Hodžić, Sanel Sojtarić, Adnan Žerić, Fadil Hamzić, Miroslav Bekavac, Vjekoslav Blaškan, Stipo Brkan, Ivica Zdenko (Jurčević, Dario Vranešević.

FEMALE TABLE TENNIS PLAYERS OF TTC "BORAC" WHO PLAYED FOR ONE OF THE
NATIONAL SELECTIONS: Alma Sijamija, Sonja Solomun, Senada Sojtarić, Saliha Sojtarić, Milanka Kaurin, Mirna Halajkijević, Nevenka Šako, Mensura Omerčaušević, Edina Ćimbur, Snježana Vasić, Amela Kurtiš, Marijeta Drobnjak, Kiso Oljenka, Dijana Grgić, Amela Merdanović, Alma Šehić, Sanja WVokić, Jadranka VulićJ Alma Fazlić, Lejla A]anlc, Aida Pezer, Samela Bašić, Vanja Šantić, Martina Batić, Adela Mešan, Linda Mešan...

— Help during the war was given to TTC "Borac" by: Mr. Sulejman Gegić from Austria, Mr. Zdenko Jurčević, a successful coach in Sweden, and the sisters Adela and Linda Mešan from Belgium.

FOR THOSE WHO DEAL IN STATISTICS

- Among all sports, the first appearance on the international stage under the flag and coat of arms bearing the golden-yellow lilies was made by the junior and youth (pioneer) table tennis national teams, in July 1992.
- At that championship, the only junior female player from Bosnia and Herzegovina was Linda Mešan, a table tennis player from TTC "Borac" of Travnik. In the men's national team, TTC "Borac" had no representative.
- The first coaches were Fikret Fazlić (men's national team) and Fadil Mešan (women's national team).
- The first victory in the jersey bearing the coat of arms with the golden-yellow lilies was achieved by Linda Mešan (TTC "Borac" Travnik) in a match against the Greek representative Vafee, 2:0. Topolčani, July 1992 (European Championship).
- The first senior women's national team of Bosnia and Herzegovina was made up of members of TTC "Borac" of Travnik: Adela Mešan, Linda Mešan, and coach Fadil Mešan. (International Championship of Slovakia, Bratislava, 1993.)
- It is a rarity for the entire national team of a country to consist of members of a single family. That honor fell to the Mešan family, at the International Championship of Slovakia in 1993.
- The first victory for our senior national team was achieved by the Mešan sisters in doubles against the Slovak pair Placha-Vahoncova. The result was 2:1 in favor of the sisters Adela and Mešan. Bratislava, 1993. _
- The first appearance at a world championship for the men's and women's national teams of Bosnia and Herzegovina came in Gothenburg, Sweden, in May 1993. The entire women's national team was made up of members of TTC "Borac" of Travnik. The lineup was as follows: Adela Mešan, Linda Mešan, Vanja Šantić, and coach Fadil Mešan.
- The first team victory at the world championship was won by the women's team against Luxembourg, 3:2. Gothenburg, 1993.
- The national teams of Bosnia and Herzegovina made their first appearance at a European championship in England - Birmingham, March-April 1994. The women's team competed in the following lineup: Adela Mešan, Linda Mešan, Elvira Mehić, and coach Fadil Mešan.

As I already said in the introduction to this book, I have tried to rescue from oblivion the most important things that marked the development of table tennis in Travnik, a sport practiced by people from seven to seventy-seven years of age. How well I have succeeded in this, I leave to you, dear readers and sports enthusiasts, to judge. And if, by any chance, you are dissatisfied, I believe - and please do not take this as immodesty on my part - that even what I have written here will still be of exceptional value. I say exceptional, because it will surely be of use to whoever has, not only more expertise, but also more time for this truly delicate task. In closing this book, I wish that in our free Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in our ever-beautiful Travnik, table tennis, like other sports, may become a bond of love and understanding among people. A bond that will help ensure that the evil inflicted upon us by (in)humans of deranged mind is never, ever repeated.

With respect, Fadil Mešan.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The author of this book - the first of its kind in Travnik, and perhaps in Bosnia and Herzegovina - Fadil Mešan (born 3 December 1941 in Kupres), came to Travnik in 1957 as a war orphan and was placed in the Student Dormitory, where he immediately began to stand out as a versatile and highly talented athlete in various branches of sport. At 16 he became a member of the Handball Club "Borac", and also played basketball for the town of Travnik's team, being named best basketball player at one tournament. He was also one of the most notable volleyball players on the Travnik team, and at the 1962 Travnik table tennis championship he won the title, becoming from then on a permanent member of the town's table tennis team. He even played several times for Travnik's bowling team, and when he was at his peak as a handball player, the then-coach of FC "Bratstvo", Mehmed-Meko Dautović, invited him to join the club and continue his sporting career playing football. He did not last long in football. His love for handball was stronger than the wishes of the many who would have liked to see him on the football pitch. He returned to his first and dearest love - handball. By profession first a teacher, and later a physical education instructor, he gave up playing handball relatively early, at the age of 27. When he was expected to take on the role of coach of the handball club, he instead, together with Ibrahim Bazdulj, Mustafa Hočkić, and Esad Kasumović, founded TTC "Borac" in 1972, where from the very first day he became coach of the women's section, a position he held until 1992. In that period of two decades, he won with the women's team everything that could be won in Bosnia and Herzegovina, first in the pioneer category, and then in the junior and senior categories. He entered Travnik's sporting history as the first coach to succeed in bringing a sports team into the highest level of competition - the First League - in the former SFRY state. During that period he also acquired the necessary table tennis education, first obtaining the title of republic-level coach, and later, after a two-year course of study, the title of graduate senior sports coach, becoming one of the few to hold that title not only in Bosnia and Herzegovina but in former Yugoslavia as well. It is interesting to note that Mr. Fadil Mešan was, at the same time, coach of the women's table tennis team competing in the First Federal League of former Yugoslavia, and coach of the men's handball team competing in the Republic League of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He continued his successful career as a table tennis coach during the aggression, briefly in Croatia, and then in Belgium, where he still lives and works today. In the course of his work with Travnik's female table tennis players, he produced a great number of outstanding competitors, among whom the best deserve mention: Dr. Alma Sijamija, sisters Senada and Saliha Sojtarić, Milanka Kaurin, Mirna Halajkijević, and Sonja Solomun. After them came a new generation of girl table tennis players, from which emerged the two most successful female table tennis players in the history of this sport, not only in our town but in the history of our young state as well - his daughters, Adela and Linda Mešan. Adela is a four-time champion of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1996, 1997, 1998, and 2000), while Linda won the title in 1999. It is interesting to note that the two of them played each other in the final every time. Both now play for "Royal Alpa XL" from Brussels, where their father Fadil is the coach. With "Royal Alpa XL" they won the Belgian Cup twice in four years (1997 and 2000) and the Belgian championship title in 1999. At several international competitions, the entire women's national team of Bosnia and Herzegovina consisted of members of the Mešan family, since Adela and Linda (a team consists of two members) competed as players while their father Fadil was the national team coach - something the Mešan family is extremely proud of. Linda and Fadil Mešan were the first to show the world the flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina with its golden-yellow lilies, in July 1992, at the European Table Tennis Championship held in the then-Czechoslovak town of Topoľčany.

Certainly the most versatile athlete in Travnik's history, Fadil Mešan is now a very successful coach in Belgium. His exceptional contribution, together with the rest of his family, to the struggle for a united, whole, and indivisible Bosnia and Herzegovina is immeasurable - something he is reluctant to speak of, even though this was his own way of fighting, just as he does not speak of the help he gave to Travnik's table tennis players during the aggression against our country.

Mustafa Gafić

CONTENTS:

FOREWORD....33
THE DEVELOPMENT OF TABLE TENNIS IN THE WORLD....44
THE BEGINNINGS OF TABLE TENNIS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA....88
TABLE TENNIS IN TRAVNIK....1010
THE FOUNDING OF SECTIONS AND SOCIETIES....1212
TTC "BORAC" - TRAVNIK FOUNDED IN 1972....1616
TTC "BORAC"'S FIRST APPEARANCE AT THE TABLE TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIP OF FORMER YUGOSLAVIA - NOVI SAD, 1974....2020
THE TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA FOR PIONEER BOYS AND GIRLS, 1975, TRAVNIK....2222
THE TWENTY-THIRD OPEN TABLE TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIP FOR PIONEER GIRLS AND BOYS, ZAGREB, JANUARY 1976....2424
TRAINING IN A FUR COAT / CHEESE IN DANGER....2727
WORKING CONDITIONS....2828
THE TABLE TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIP OF FORMER YUGOSLAVIA FOR PIONEER GIRLS AND BOYS, TRAVNIK, 24-26 JUNE 1977....3030
FIRST INTERNATIONAL SUCCESS: "BORAC" TRAVNIK - "Šlez" Vroclav, POLAND (WOMEN) 5:1 3232
ELECTION OF NEW LEADERSHIP OF TTC "BORAC" TRAVNIK, 1979....3434
TTC "BORAC" TRAVNIK - MEMBER OF THE FIRST FEDERAL LEAGUE OF FORMER YUGOSLAVIA....3636
COOPERATION WITH TTC "GRANIT" FROM STRZELIN, POLAND....4242
THE THIRTY-THIRD OPEN TABLE TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIP OF ZAGREB FOR PIONEER BOYS AND GIRLS, ZAGREB, 1986....5252
THE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP OF FORMER YUGOSLAVIA IN TABLE TENNIS FOR PIONEER GIRLS AND BOYS, UMAG, 1988....5454
THE EUROPEAN TABLE TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIP FOR PIONEER GIRLS AND BOYS, JUNIOR GIRLS AND BOYS, NOVI SAD, 1988....5656
TTC "BORAC" TRAVNIK (WOMEN) IN THE INTER-REPUBLIC TABLE TENNIS LEAGUE OF FORMER YUGOSLAVIA....5858
TTC "BORAC" TRAVNIK - activities during the war....6060
APPEARANCES ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE....6666
INTERNATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC IN TABLE TENNIS, BRATISLAVA, FROM 18 TO 21 FEBRUARY 1993....6666
THE 42ND WORLD TABLE TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIP FOR SENIOR MEN AND WOMEN, GOTHENBURG, 12-24 MAY 1993....7070
THE WELCOME FOR THE TABLE TENNIS NATIONAL TEAMS OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AT THE AIRPORT AND THE PORT OF GOTHENBURG....7171
TRANSLATION OF A TEXT FROM THE SWEDISH NEWSPAPER "I DAG"....7373
PROUD OF THEIR COUNTRY....7373
APPEARANCES ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE FOLLOWING THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP IN GOTHENBURG....7676
THE EUROPEAN TABLE TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIP FOR SENIOR MEN AND WOMEN, BIRMINGHAM, FROM 24 MARCH TO 4 APRIL 1994....7676
TTC "BORAC" TRAVNIK - MEN'S TEAM IN THE "NANCY EVANS" CUP....7878
THE 43RD WORLD TABLE TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIP FOR SENIOR MEN AND WOMEN, TIANJIN (CHINA), MAY 1995....7979
IN WORD AND PICTURE....8181
EVENTS AND INDIVIDUALS....8181

TABLE TENNIS PLAYERS, MALE AND FEMALE, WHO WORE THE JERSEY OF TTC 'BORAC' BUT DID NOT COME UP THROUGH ITS TABLE TENNIS SCHOOL 8181
A DISABLED TABLE TENNIS PLAYER 8282
PRESIDENTS OF TTC 'BORAC' FROM TRAVNIK DURING WHOSE TIME THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PAGES OF TABLE TENNIS WERE WRITTEN 8383
FOR THOSE WHO CHOSE TABLE TENNIS AS THEIR SPORT 9797
A LITTLE BALL WITH MANY FACES 9999
NAMES FROM TTC "BORAC" TRAVNIK, 1972-2000 100100
FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN STATISTICS 101101
ABOUT THE AUTHOR 102102
CONTENTS: 104104